the weekly Standard

JULY 20, 2009 $4.95

THE IRANIAN VOLCANO
REUEL MARC GERECHT

OUT OF ALASKA

Sarah Palin on why she resigned and what she plans next

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
MATTHEW CONTINETTI

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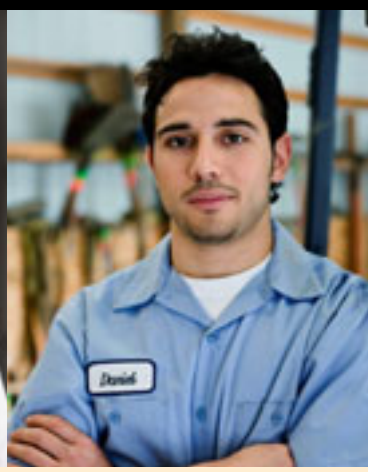
Guess who'll pay for new energy taxes...



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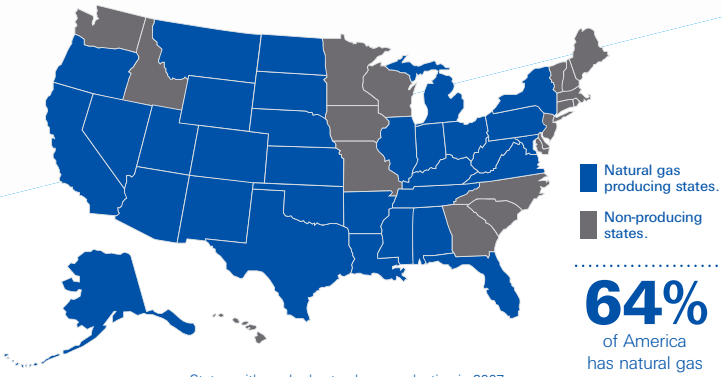

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $4.95. Back issues, $4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2009, Clarity Media Group. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of Clarity Media Group.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The *New York Times*'s Gilded Age

The *New York Times* embarrassed itself again last week. A photo essay in the July 5 Sunday magazine purported to document America's "second Gilded Age"—i.e., the real estate bubble which, having now popped, has left countless high-end construction projects in a state of half-completion. The essay and an accompanying slideshow on the paper's website were promoted as the work of a Portuguese photographer, Edgar Martins, whom the *Times* had commissioned to produce the feature and who, in the words of a *Times* editorial note, "creates his images with long exposures but without digital manipulation."

As *schadenfreude* over the real estate meltdown remains at a high pitch, these pictures of unfinished McMansions abandoned in mid-hammer blow were understandably more popular than the typical *Times* magazine article, and the online slideshow was widely linked to by other websites. The editorial note was curious, in retrospect. Imagine if the paper were to preface its articles with a note specifying that

From Adam Gurno's website

the reporter has created the work by the sweat of his own brow, without spin or plagiarism. The effect is to invite extra scrutiny. (Remember the Gary Hart presidential campaign of 1987-88? Dogged by rumors he was having an affair, Hart told reporters, "Follow me around. I don't care. I'm serious. If anybody wants to put a tail on me, go ahead. They'll be very bored.")

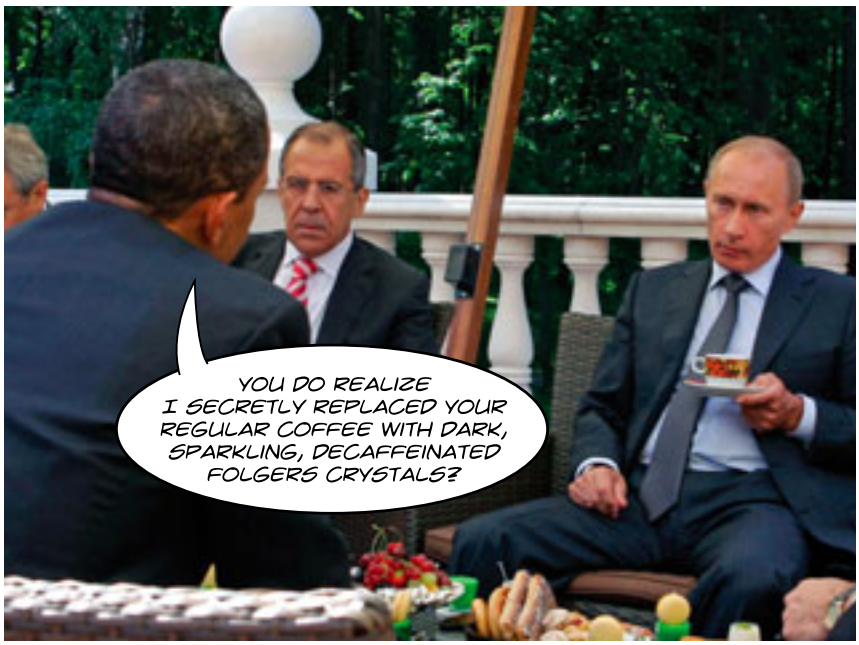
Scrutiny of the *Times* first came from a computer geek in Minnesota, Adam Gurno, who reads and posts at the MetaFilter blog under the screen-name "unixrat." "I'll eat my hat if this is not fakery," "unixrat" wrote. He had noticed a curious symmetry in one of the photos (which upon close examination also shows up in several others). Look at "the wiring and the wood-grain," on the left and right halves of the photo, he said; "98% of it is identical. . . . There's simply no way to build a house with studs having mirror-identical wood grain and electrical wiring with matching running. Furthermore, it would be the most pointless idea ever—all that stuff will be covered by drywall and invisible to the homebuyer. No one will pay 500% more to have mirrored framing that they literally cannot see." Gurno was right, and produced a simple animation showing that the photographer had used Photoshop or some other digital manipulation software to create the mirror image—the two halves of the house were not *that* similar.

In an interview with blogger Simon Owens, Gurno later disclaimed any particular knowledge of photography, though he does know a bit about framing a house. More important, he said, "When you do computer programming there's an old maxim that to 10,000 eyes all bugs are shallow. . . . What it means is that if you have a lot of people looking at it they'll find all the bugs in your program, and I think the same goes for this. If I wouldn't have found it then someone else would have found it."

The *Times* shortly thereafter acknowledged in an editor's note that

> A reader [had] discovered on close examination that one of the pictures

What Were They Thinking?



NEWSCOM: BARACK OBAMA AT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S RESIDENCE OUTSIDE MOSCOW, JULY 7

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was digitally altered, apparently for aesthetic reasons. Editors later confronted the photographer and determined that most of the images did not wholly reflect the reality they purported to show. Had the editors known that the photographs had been digitally manipulated, they would not have published the picture essay, which has been removed from NYTimes.com.

This is not quite the end of the story, as far as THE SCRAPBOOK is concerned. We looked at the slideshow before the *Times* took it down and while we enjoyed it, we were focused on something other than digital manipulation: The subjects of the photos were striking but we were not blown away by the artistry of the photographs themselves.

Our reaction: For *this* the *Times* had hired a photographer who happens to be based in Bedford, England, and paid for him to fly to a handful of construction sites around the United States? We don't know what Martins's fee and travel expenses must have been, but the *Times* could surely have produced a similar feature by hiring freelance professionals in the locales where the photos were taken for some small fraction of what they must have spent on Martins.

For a paper known to be bleeding cash, and which has barely kept its creditors at bay this year, it seemed a rather extravagant feature, even before it turned out also to have been based on misrepresentation. The *Times*, ironically, has vividly documented a new "Gilded Age." Its own. ♦

Book Alert!

Our colleague Christopher Caldwell's *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam and the West* (Doubleday) is now out—400 pages of must-reading that's also fascinating reading. The book was first published a couple of months ago in Great Britain, where it was well-received despite its failure to accord with—or even to respect—the dictates of political correctness. It deserves a wide and serious readership here, too. It's a truly rare combination of ground-truth reporting about—and historically and sociologically informed analysis of—the state of Europe today.

One of our astute colleagues puts it well. The book, he says, "has the highest number of penetrating insights per page of any book he's read," which will come as no surprise to readers who have appreciated Caldwell's writing in these pages, where he has been a valued contributor since the magazine's birth in 1995.

So, if you want to engage seriously in the big debates about politics, society, and religion in the 21st century—you can't leave home without Caldwell's *Reflections*. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'What has encouraged me greatly as I travel around the country, from the shaken baronies of Wall Street to the regional centers of commerce and back roads of rural America, is the common acknowledgment not just that a course correction is overdue, but that this is an exciting opportunity to construct a new model that will serve us better for the challenges ahead. To do that will mean some serious . . . " (Tom Brokaw, from his foreword to *Reset: How This Crisis Can Restore Our Values and Renew America*, by Kurt Andersen). ♦

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Casual

Sound Off

I was up three mornings in a row last week and at my post—a comfortable chair next to a lamp table upon which my coffee sat—watching the semifinal and final matches at Wimbledon. Tennis is the sport I played best as a boy and, when played well, the sport I enjoy watching above all others. Nothing unusual about a tennis fan watching high-level tennis played at the grandest of all the grand slam tournaments—except, perhaps, that I watched all three mornings with the sound turned up only high enough so that I could hear the dim pock of tennis balls but not high enough to hear the voices of the various expert commentators, John McEnroe, Mary Carillo, and company.

I once read that one of the signs of encroaching madness is watching television with the sound off. My own sense is that just the reverse is true: The way to madness lies in watching television with the sound on. So irrelevant, so repetitive, so low grade is sports chat that I have, in fact, taken to watching all sports events with the sound off. Baseball, college and pro basketball and football, all are immensely improved bereft of the clichés and cheap sentiments of their highly paid announcers. I don't watch hockey or NASCAR racing—if I did, I shouldn't find time to write even this brief casual—but I feel confident that they, too, would be much improved by silence.

Many an evening I feel I can also watch the news with the sound off, so predictable does it all seem. After all, most of the people paid to deliver the news—so-called "on-camera personnel"—aren't there for their wit or powers of formulation but chiefly for their hairdos and wardrobe and calming effect. Their less than penetrating words only obscure a clear view of their neckties, outer coats, coifs, and delicately applied makeup.

Most of the time one knows what these people—"speakerines," the French call them, denoting that for the most part they are devices through whom words written by scruffier characters than they are conveyed—are going to say anyhow. Conventional wisdom, received opinions, false sentiment, dollops of happy talk, such make up their gist. Does one really require sound to pick up the absent nuances of a Keith Olbermann or a Glenn Beck, a Rachel Maddow or a Pat Buchanan? One has only to glimpse the self-satisfaction playing upon their faces to realize that what they know we have no need to hear.

Ezra Pound famously called literature news that stays news. As for the news itself, nothing is more permeable. News, to wring a change on Ol' Ez, is precisely that which doesn't stay news. Much of it requires no comment whatsoever. After a president is in office for more than four months, we know everything he is likely to say. As for presidential press secretaries, their message never changes: The president is, was, and always will be correct, so please don't bother me with contradictions, misquotations, or simple logic. New messages from al Qaeda all come down to the same: You've had the course, Morris. Cures for diseases and announcements of new wonder drugs are generally soon revoked. The weather of course changes, but it can be shown on a crawl.

Things were better in the old days, or so people of a certain age in the business like to think. One wonders. Edward R. Murrow, Eric Sevareid, John Cameron Swayze, and the rest of the major older television figures, were they the real thing or merely a set of empty trench coats? Television news-reading and commentating is not a field notable for attracting geniuses. I make an exception for David Brinkley, who was no genius either, but at least, toward the end of his career, specialized in a cynicism about politics and the politicians of all parties that was bracing.

No exception need be made for Walter Cronkite. During his 19 years (1962-81) as the anchor for CBS television news, Cronkite was considered "the most trusted man in America." Turns out he could chiefly be trusted never to say anything unpredictable. Whatever the going story—the walk on the moon, the death of John F. Kennedy, the 1968 Democratic convention riots—he piled on with platitudes. The tag line with which he used to end his show was, "And that's the way it is." The problem is that his version wasn't the way it was at all. He didn't have a clue to the way it really was.

The old joke about Wagner's music is that it isn't as bad as it sounds. The non-joke about television commentary—news, sports, and the rest—is that it is precisely as bad as it sounds. The volume button—there, on the lower left—please, turn it all the way down. Thank you.

Joseph Epstein

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The Balloon Deflates

The air is seeping out of the Great Liberal Hot Air Balloon. American liberals have been hoping, wishing, and praying—okay, maybe not praying—for over a quarter-century for an end to the ghastly interlude of conservative dominance ushered in by Ronald Reagan. Surely it was all a bad dream, a waking nightmare, a bizarre deviation from the preordained path of history.

With the Democratic congressional victories in November 2006, the nightmare seemed to be ending. And in November 2008, with the election of Barack Obama and increased congressional majorities, it seemed to be over. A new era had dawned.

But did it? Maybe we're now experiencing a liberal interlude, not a liberal inflection point. After all, only six months into the new administration, even a talented hot air blower like President Obama, assisted by friendly gusts of wind from the media, is having trouble keeping the liberal blimp afloat.

The stimulus hasn't worked. Cap-and-trade and health care reform are in trouble. The can't-we-all-get-along foreign policy isn't leading to a more peaceful world. And the administration seems to have no idea what to do about Guantánamo.

Congressional Democrats are nervous. Even Obama's media base is concerned. At the end of last week, three leading Obamaphiles offered their lamentations. "The fact is, Obama may be blowing a major opportunity for reform," worried Joe Klein. "There's now a real risk that President Obama will find himself caught in a political-economic trap," warned Paul Krugman. "Failure. Overwhelming, amazing failure," was David Brooks's take on the administration's effort to deal with health care inflation—something the president is (according to Brooks) "fervently committed to reducing."

Why such long faces? Because they realize that, despite the financial meltdown on the Bush administration's watch and the errors of omission and commission by the GOP over the last decade, the American public hasn't fundamentally rethought their turn in 1980 away from big government liberalism.

Gallup reports, "Thus far in 2009, 40 percent of Americans interviewed in national Gallup Poll surveys describe their political views as conservative, 35 percent as moderate, and 21 percent as liberal. This represents a slight increase for conservatism in the U.S. since 2008, returning it to a level last seen in 2004." This despite two decisive Democratic election victories in the intervening years. Gallup also reported that 39 percent of Americans say their political views have become more conservative in recent years. Only 18 percent say they've grown more liberal.

Similarly, a recent *Washington Post*/ABC News poll had Americans favoring smaller government with fewer services to a larger government with more services by 54 to 41 percent—a slightly more conservative result than in 2004. As Michael Barone summarizes the situation, "Americans seem to be recoiling against big government when it threatens to become a reality rather than a campaign promise."

Tactical errors by the Democrats and breakdowns in message discipline on the part of the administration are helping the recoil. When Americans hear Vice President Joe Biden say on Sunday, "We misread how bad the economy was," and then watch President Obama step out a couple of days later to explain, "I would actually, rather than say misread—we had incomplete information," they lose confidence in the administration's assurances that they know what they're doing in health care or energy policy.

Rahm Emanuel famously said, "Never let a serious crisis go to waste." The American people, to their credit, seem unwilling to let the Obama team exploit this crisis as thoroughly as they'd like to. Now it's up to conservative leaders—and Republican politicians—to do two things: thwart Obama's liberal power grabs and rebuild a conservative governing agenda.

The first part is easier, and Republicans are doing a decent job of fighting a strategic defense against Obama. As in all effective defensive efforts, you need tactical offensive thrusts. This recent one, for example, from an energetic soon-to-be-former GOP governor (who just might have a political future on the national stage), wasn't bad:

> The debt that our nation is incurring, trillions of dollars that we're passing on to our kids, expecting them to pay off for us, is immoral and doesn't even make economic sense. . . . President Obama, how are you going to pay for this one- or two- or three-trillion dollar health-care plan? How are you going to pay off the stimulus package, those borrowed dollars? How are you going to pay for so many things that you are proposing and you are implementing? Americans deserve to know.

As for developing a coherent and compelling conservative governing agenda for 2012—*hoc opus, hic labor est*.

—*William Kristol*

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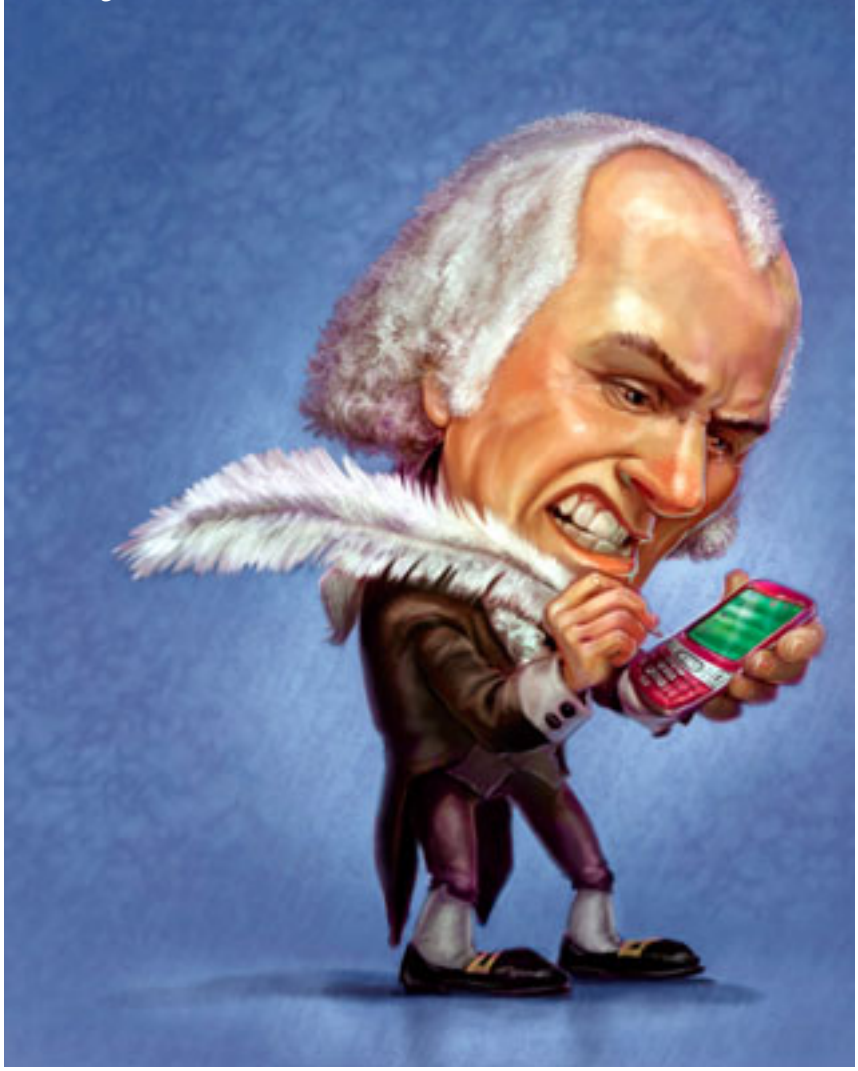
Twittering the Constitution

All the Founding Fathers go tweet, tweet, tweet.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE



I will Twitter the Constitution of the United States of America. And the Bill of Rights. You may well ask, why? The Constitution is readily available, in print and online, set down in full without the distraction or annoyance of abridgments, elisions, abbreviations, acronyms, emoticons, and constructions such as "i h8 u" to express our feeling about inherited nobility once it had ceased to be our BFF. The Constitution is there for everyone to read. Ah, reading. People just don't do much of that these days. Especially not kids. Of course today's young people are *able* to read (thanks to No Child Left Behind and other brilliant improvements in public education). But I see no evidence that youths actually do read anything except text messages. Thus my project. Tech-savvy parents can use their BlackBerry phones to send the 140-characters-or-less items of cyberspeak that I have prepared and thereby fill their children's minds with substantive tweets.

"Tweet" is what I mean, isn't it? I'm not a tech-savvy parent. I communicate with my children via the old-media format called yelling. I have never Twittered or Tweeted or even Chirped. (I have Quacked, but only to lure mallards toward my duck blind.) Excuse me if I don't get the jargon right. Nor am I conversant with all the initialism that adds speed and convenience to typing with one's thumbs. LOL may mean "laughing out loud" or it may mean "lardy, otiose loptopophiles." I'm not sure.

Speaking of clueless squares, I have a second reason for Twittering the Constitution. I understand Twitter has become popular among politicians. This technology allows them to stay in perpetual contact with their constituents. The electorate now has instant information about what politicians have been up to. Considering what Governor Mark Sanford, Senator John Ensign, ex-Governor Eliot Spitzer, et al, have been up to, is this a good thing? And imagine the embarrassment of the Sarah Palin Twitter feed letting everyone in America know what she's been doing when she herself hasn't the slightest. She has to consult her own Tweets.

Giving politicians a Twitter-ready version of the U.S. Constitution to send to voters in place of the politicians' own thoughts will raise the tone of America's political discourse while sparing us the pain and humiliation of learning anything more about our dreadful elected representatives, their idiot ideas, or their unwelcome whereabouts.

Without further ado:

Pre-A: We the people R the man. Here's how it rolls. Art1: Congress

GARY LOCKE

P.J. O'Rourke, a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is the author, most recently, of* Driving Like Crazy.

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do law. Got Senate/House-o-Reps.

HR 2yr deal. Reps mst b 25, homie citz 7yrs. 1R per 30k pop/min 1R per St. St pop #s @10yrs. Guv pix subs. HR pix own bigs. HR impeaches Clinton.

Sen 6yr deal. 1/3 go @2yrs. 2Ss/St Mst b 30, homie citz 9yrs. VP tie-breaks. S gives Clinton a bye.

$ Bills fr H & pass S w/amends. Prez mst X or nix. 2/3H&S 2 nix nix

Cong power = Tax Mooch Tariff Green crd Chapt 11 Print $ Bust cons Pat pend Law up War on Hang pirates.

Cong power not = No habeas corp No x post facto law Free trade 4 Sts. Kings dukes for. poofters R bogus.

Sts pow not = For. treats Cust. duties @ other Sts. Go 2 war w/o say please

Art2: Prez 4yrs per Elec Col SAT score VP ditto VP subs. mst b nat born homie 35. Defnds Const & CnC Army Navy Air Force Marines

Prez pow = For. treats w 2/3S yes Appts Cabnt offs Ambs Sup Ct Js DoD brass w S yes Hi Cong Bye Cong St-o-Un add. No smoking.

Art3: Sup Ct rox Treason sux. Art4: Sts R cool Newbie Sts per Cong. Art5: Amend Con=2/3H&S+3/4Sts. Art6: US IOUs cool Const rox No God Squad

Art7: G2G TTFN. 9/17/1787. Bill-o-Rites TK :)

Flame on –church+guns. No GIs n cribz. No frisk w/o ProbCawz Due Pross rox Plea5th Get off my lawn SpeedTrialz w/jur&shystr. Pwr 2 D Peeps.

Twelve little tweets—all that's needed to run the richest, most powerful and most important nation in the world for more than 220 years. There's a message in that, and not just a text message. But we can text it. And let's do so, to a certain well-known someone who is every bit as glued to his cell phone as American teens and their fretfully hovering helicopter parents.

Mr. President, do you think the myriad legislative initiatives and regulatory proposals that spew forth from your administration could stand this test of concision? Will they endure for centuries? Your "reform" of health care, for example? Back in the Cretaceous Age of Hillary, when such lawmaking was last abroad in the land, the mere outline of the first lady's proposed ordinances and enactments was 1,400 pages long. Drop it on your foot and you'd require every bit of the health care she promised to reform. As for her reformation—that didn't last too long.

Furthermore, Mr. President, when you with your very modern brain read the Constitution in this very modern form, do you "download" any grounds, basis, authorization, sanction, warrant or reasonable excuse for the interfering, imperious, arbitrary, confiscatory, socialistic, busybody pettifogging you're doing in Washington? There's an old-fashioned computer term, from back in the punch-card days. It's so out-of-date that a fresh, with-it, happening young president like you may not understand it. But the Founding Fathers would have had the 411. GIGO—Garbage In, Garbage Out. ♦

The MAD Legacy of Robert McNamara

It's badly in need of rethinking.

BY MICHAEL ANTON

Nearly all of the voluminous commentary on the death of Robert McNamara has focused on his conduct of the Vietnam war. This is as inevitable as it is natural. Vietnam was not merely McNamara's Egyptian campaign, Austerlitz, Moscow retreat, and Waterloo all rolled into one. It was also the defining event of the generation whose members are even now busy writing his obituaries.

But there is another side to McNamara's legacy—one largely forgotten by history but arguably more relevant today than the Vietnam war. McNamara spearheaded a revolution in America's nuclear posture whose effects are largely still with us. Indeed, most of his first three-plus years at the Pentagon were consumed by a comprehensive rethinking of nuclear strategy.

"No single public figure," wrote British historian Lawrence Freedman in his exhaustive (and exhausting) study *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, "has influenced the way we think about nuclear weapons quite as much as Robert S. McNamara." Penned in 1981, those words remain true. Whether the ideas McNamara helped put in place fit the world we now inhabit—whether they made sense at the time—are eminently debatable questions. And, incidentally, ones that no one is debating.

Robert McNamara became secretary of defense in January 1961 at age 44 (only one SecDef—Donald Rumsfeld, in his first outing in 1975—has been younger). McNamara had no relationship with the new president, and his defense experience totaled four years of ROTC and three years as an Army Air Corps officer running statistical analy-

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ses on procurement and logistics—something like just-in-time inventory *avant la lettre*. Skeptical of the offer, he warned John F. Kennedy that he hadn't kept up with military affairs since 1946. Kennedy brushed aside the concern with the remark that there was no school for presidents either. He wanted McNamara for his agile mind.

And agile it was. Everyone remembers the phrase "whiz kids" as a term of abuse used against McNamara and the coterie of intellectuals he brought to the Pentagon as advisers. But its origins go back to the team McNamara assembled to run complex analyses of the World War II air force. McNamara managed to keep most of his team together after the war, and to sell its services to the highest bidder—the Ford Motor Company, as it turned out.

Bringing their number-crunching skills ruthlessly to bear, they managed to shake the moribund, money-losing automaker to its foundations and turn it around. By 1960, McNamara was president of the company—the first ever from outside the family.

He spent less than two months in the job before being tapped by Kennedy for the Pentagon, where he was immediately immersed in roiling, secretive, and highly technical debates over America's nuclear weapons arsenal: how it should be configured, where it should be deployed, if—and when—it should be used.

McNamara took to the grisly subject with relish. As Fred Kaplan wrote in *The Wizards of Armageddon*, his history of nuclear strategy, "From the beginning of his tenure in the Pentagon, Robert McNamara was fascinated with nuclear weapons—horrified by their awesome destruction, yet eager to find a way to bring them under some sort of rational control."

As different as his new job was from running a car company, McNamara quickly found that the Defense Department of 1961 shared something with the Ford of 1946: Its approach to its core mission was a shambles.

That core mission was to deter Moscow from launching an invasion of Western Europe, or a strategic attack on NATO bases overseas or the American homeland, and—if deterrence failed—to stop any Soviet advance and make their adventurism far more costly than any gains. Enshrined thinking on how best to do this was, to put it mildly, unsubtle.

Robert McNamara after a hike through the Mekong Delta, 1964

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With the advent of nuclear weapons, the military's youngest branch—the Air Force—became its de facto "senior service," the one whose budgets were never questioned, whose every request was treated as urgent. The Air Force had the bomb, and the bomb was the guarantor of peace. The Air Force was also the home of the Strategic Air Command, by far the most important military unit in the U.S. armed forces, and the personal fiefdom of General Curtis LeMay for nine years—a tenure whose length has never been equaled in the modern military.

Famous for his bombing campaigns against Japan—which destroyed half the developed areas of more than 60 cities—LeMay had absolute faith in the value of strategic bombing to win wars by destroying enemy infrastructure and industry and undermining morale. The war plan cooked up by his staff officers—jokingly nicknamed "Operation Sunday Punch," after a WWII bombing campaign in Normandy—was nothing more complex or discriminating than an all-out attack on every significant target in the Soviet Union (later expanded to include Eastern Europe, China, and North Korea). Whatever card the Soviets might play, this was the only one the U.S. military was prepared to play in response.

The Air Force's predilection for indiscriminate strategic bombing was implicitly endorsed by the Eisenhower administration, though for entirely different reasons. Ike wanted to keep military spending down and had no interest in trying to keep up with Soviet conventional forces. So he sought to balance Soviet conventional superiority with American nuclear superiority. The doctrine came to be called "massive retaliation" and was laid out in a speech and article by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in 1954. Dulles argued that since the United States could not possibly defend every frontier that the Soviets could threaten, and since the West did not wish forever to remain on the defensive as the Communists nibbled away the free world's perimeter, any Soviet provocation risked the full might of the American arsenal.

A team of "defense intellectuals"—most of them working under an Air Force contract at the RAND Cor-

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poration—shot this doctrine, and the war plan behind it, full of holes. But the Air Force (and especially LeMay) didn't want to hear it. Not until McNamara became secretary did their ideas gain a real hearing.

McNamara swept aside "massive retaliation," arguing that it was fundamentally destabilizing because it was not credible. Given America's wartime behavior, it was impossible to believe that the United States would respond to small brushfire wars, half a world away, with an all-out nuclear attack. Threatening something that no one would believe was worse than useless. To that end, he introduced the fuzzier but less inherently bellicose doctrine of "flexible response" and oversaw a modest build-up of conventional forces, designed to be able to meet aggression in a more proportionate manner.

McNamara also took to heart several RAND studies—serially ignored by the Air Force—which showed that the forward deployed bombers vital to the success of "Sunday Punch" were shockingly vulnerable to a Soviet surprise attack and moved ahead with building the modern "strategic triad" of bombers, ICBMs, and submarines to ensure a credible second-strike capability that would make a crippling surprise first strike much less tempting. He endorsed a version of what the RAND people called "counterforce"—that is, targeting Soviet nuclear and other military forces rather than cities, partly in an attempt to limit the damage those forces could do to Europe and to the U.S. homeland, and partly so as to hold Soviet cities hostage to further strikes and use that threat as a bargaining chip.

Perhaps McNamara's most lasting positive legacy with respect to nuclear doctrine was his integration of the nuclear forces of the military's branches. In the earliest days of the bomb, this was not an issue; only the Air Force had the asset. But with the advent of the Polaris submarine-launched missile and the "tactical" nuclear weapons meant for battlefield use, the other services grabbed their piece of the bomb—and the budgets that went with it. Each branch had its own doctrine on the use of nuclear weapons—with all the potential for miscalculation and chaos that engendered. Eisenhower began the process of service-wide integration, but McNamara saw it through.

Nearly every decision regarding nuclear weapons that McNamara made was based on the same kind of data-laden analysis he had pioneered during World War II and used to turn around Ford. What served him so well in these endeavors proved disastrously inapt to the war in Vietnam—and led to his undoing.

But the rest of the story is not so simple. McNamara was convinced that, even with budgetary concerns, by crunching the numbers in the right way, he could arrive at the optimal force. To the uniformed planners, "counterforce" required an ever growing nuclear arsenal, to match the potentially limitless number of Soviet military targets. Not prepared to give way, McNamara set arbitrary numbers of weapons "needed"—he capped ICBMs at 1,054, a level that remained in force until the Reagan years—and redesigned strategy around those numbers. He found the answer in "assured destruction"—later immortalized as "mutual assured destruction" or MAD. Here was a strategy eminently suited to systems analysis. Simply calculate the destructive power needed to assure the destruction of the other side, leave a little margin for error, and build just that much and no more.

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A number of policy implications followed—among them the abandonment of any attempt at civil defense and the demonization of missile defense as inherently destabilizing to the system.

Ronald Reagan abhorred MAD and tried valiantly, if unsuccessfully, to sweep it into the dustbin of history. Today, nearly eight years after opting out of the ABM treaty, the United States is still woefully behind on developing defenses against ballistic missiles, and as a matter of policy will pursue only defenses against "limited" threats (i.e., a small number of missiles fired by a third world power). Despite facing the very real threat of nuclear terror in an American city, no serious consideration has been given to civil defense since the early 1960s.

The George W. Bush administration was better on these issues than the current one—President Bush did, after all, put more energy into missile defense than any president since Reagan. But he also spent a great deal of political capital on backward-looking, if probably harmless, arms agreements with Russia. Strangely, for a president who viscerally felt the danger of further massive terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, he made no attempt (at least not in public) to rethink strategic doctrine in light of the threat of nuclear terror.

But Bush's record is sterling compared with President Obama's. Under the new administration, the fate of U.S. antimissile interceptors in Europe is in doubt. Like Reagan, Obama has embraced the noble vision of a world without nuclear weapons. Unlike the former president, he seems to believe that the goal can be accomplished by a combination of talk and unilateral demonstrations of goodwill by the United States. And he cancelled a program to update and secure the reliability of the U.S. arsenal.

In the meantime, that old standby MAD is supposed to keep the peace. Who, exactly, is being deterred from doing what, by virtue of being threatened with what, are questions that are never asked. Instead, we continue to rely on the faulty answers formulated by Robert S. McNamara nearly 50 years ago. ♦

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Revolt of the Congress

Robert Gates's defense cuts meet resistance on Capitol Hill. BY TOM DONNELLY & GARY SCHMITT

One of Barack Obama's most politically adept decisions upon winning the White House was to ask Robert Gates to remain in place as the nation's secretary of defense. By choosing Gates—who had served with distinction at the CIA, the National Security Council, and most recently at the Pentagon under George W. Bush—Obama added credibility to his administration in the area of national security where his own résumé was lacking. Perhaps inspired by Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*—a book candidate Obama said he had read and been taken with—the new president hoped the choice would help him sell his decisions on national security and the military to moderates in his own party and members of the GOP since his front man had been the successful, war-winning Pentagon chief under the previous president.

And for a while, it worked. In early April, Gates announced a series of cuts in defense programs and spending that, with few exceptions, generated only isolated criticism on the Hill. The ostensible justifications for the cuts were two: the current fiscal crisis and the need to focus the military on today's wars, not speculative future contingencies. For many, these rationales seemed reasonable enough, especially coming from Secretary Gates.

But in fact they're not reasonable. If the fiscal crisis was the driving force behind the cuts, then someone forgot to notify the rest of the administration. While the Pentagon was being told to shut down programs, the Obama team was encouraging the rest of government to spend like drunken sailors. As the stimulus package was being cobbled together, military projects best fit the Keynesian profile of "shovel-ready," yet the Pentagon received just one half of one percent of the $787 billion in additional funding.

The Senate Armed Services Committee approved the acquisition of seven more F-22s, even as the White House was announcing a possible veto of the defense bill if it contained money for keeping the jet fighter's production line open.

If Gates, moreover, had truly been concerned about today's wars, he would have taken the savings that came from his program cuts in April and used them to increase the size of the Army. But he didn't. Instead, he's capped ground forces and appears satisfied to live with an Army and Marine Corps that are severely stretched and will remain so as we build up in Afghanistan.

The first sign that there might be a crack in the wall of the Gates-Obama defense plan was the mid-June decision by the House Armed Services Committee to begin buying parts for 12 more F-22s, the stealthy air-dominance fighter that Secretary Gates has wanted to limit to 187 planes. As one Democrat on the committee put it, "It's not a Democrat or Republican thing at all, but rather a Congress versus the executive in terms of who's in charge."

Then, in late June, the Senate Armed Services Committee approved the acquisition of seven more F-22s as well, even as the White House was announcing a possible veto of the defense bill if it contained money for keeping the jet fighter's production line open. In addition, the committee's version of the bill authorized a 30,000-soldier expansion of the active Army—in other words, it made a more substantive commitment to winning "the war we're in" than Gates himself. As Senator Joseph Lieberman, who sponsored the provision, observed, "The number of deployed soldiers will increase into next year because we will be sending more troops to win the war in Afghanistan before a large number of soldiers begin to return from Iraq."

Less reported on but no less significant a sign that Congress may have a different vision of the country's defense priorities came when the House version of the annual defense authorization bill called for the revival of an independent "National Defense Panel" to assess the administration's Quadrennial Defense Review. If there is to be a larger revolt against the Gates cuts and defense vision, this will be the central bureaucratic battleground.

Here's why: The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) is the process by which a new administration determines whether U.S. military forces are adequate to meet America's strategic needs. There have been three previous QDRs—indeed five counting the first Bush administration's "Base Force" and the Clinton administration's "Bottom-Up" reviews. In the post-Cold War environment, answering the traditional question of force-planning—"How much is enough?"—has proved difficult.

When the Republican Congress wrote the law mandating the 1997 QDR, it specified that an outside National Defense Panel should evaluate the Pentagon's work; congres-

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sional defense leaders did not trust the Clinton administration to do an honest review. The House Armed Services Committee has revived the panel for exactly the same reason and has done so with the explicit backing of both the committee chairman, Representative Ike Skelton, and the ranking Republican, Howard "Buck" McKeon. When the House and Senate versions of the defense bill go to conference to be reconciled, there is a good chance that Senate Republicans and key Democrats like Lieberman will accede to the House's call for an oversight body.

And so the National Defense Panel will be a natural rallying point for the disparate forces on Capitol Hill and throughout Washington seeking to derail the Gates train. It will provide a vehicle not just for reviewing the termination of the F-22 and other major procurements but also for advocating a more meaningful commitment to irregular warfare by increasing the numbers of U.S. land forces. It would offset the twin Gates strategies of divide-and-conquer—playing off one procurement program against another—and pitting concerns about irregular and high-tech conventional warfare against each other in a zero-sum budget game.

As of today, the QDR is an exercise in putting strategic lipstick on a budget-cutting pig; it is part and parcel of the administration's larger goal of fundamentally reordering federal priorities. At the end of eight years, if the White House has its way, the U.S. budget will ape those of most European countries: huge domestic entitlements, with a defense burden shrinking to or below 3 percent of GDP.

The proposed National Defense Panel could be a small but significant sign that some Democrats and Republicans are having second thoughts about this direction and are willing to challenge Gates's aura of infallibility. If the Senate adds the National Defense Panel provision to the final defense bill, the stage will be set, if not for a battle royal, then at least for an honest debate about the country's future defenses. ♦

The Grass Is Greener

Wimbledon's lawns are once again tennis's premier surface. BY TOM PERROTTA

Four years ago, Wimbledon's lawns were seen as a problem. "The U.S. Open and Australian Open championships get the best games, you get a better standard of tennis at those," David Lloyd, a former British Davis Cup captain, told the *Times* of London in 2005. "The grass will eventually go." Grass courts have been under attack for years by sharp-tongued players, from Manuel Santana—"Grass is for cows," he said, before he finally won Wimbledon in 1966—to Marat Safin, who simply said, "I hate this." The bounces were too unpredictable. The modern grass "season," if you could call it that, was too short: a mere five weeks. There wasn't time to adjust one's footwork and strokes. Why bother playing on the stuff at all? Even Sue Barker, a former pro and beloved BBC tennis commentator, said that the end of grass-court tennis at Wimbledon was only a matter of time.

Luckily for us, the folks at the All England Club are too stubborn to listen to the likes of Lloyd. Since he delivered his ill-informed attack (and not for the first time), Wimbledon, the most wonderful tennis tournament on the annual calendar, has hosted hour upon hour of the finest tennis one could ever hope to see. On July 5, Roger Federer won his sixth Wimbledon title—and a record 15th major title, surpassing Pete Sampras—in a tense five-set final that spanned a record 77 games and broke the heart of Andy Roddick, the American whose greatest performance was not quite good enough to defeat the sport's greatest player.

Last year, Rafael Nadal defeated Federer in what most tennis observers consider the finest match in history, a 4-hour-and-48-minute drama that played out over the course of a stormy London day and ended in near-darkness after 9 P.M. Nadal and Federer played five sets nearly as compelling the year before, and four entertaining sets the year before that. Even women's tennis, mostly in a funk these days owing to early retirements and a less-than-dazzling crop of youngsters, has glistened on the grass. In 2005, Venus Williams saved a match point against Lindsay Davenport in a superb women's final; this year, her sister Serena battled Elena Dementieva for nearly three hours in the semifinals, and saved a match point, too. Compare that to the French Open, which hasn't had a women's final extend to a third set since 2001.

Until recently, Wimbledon, and grass in general, was not known for producing good theater—the thrillers between John McEnroe and Bjorn Borg in 1980 and 1981 being the exception rather than the rule. "Grass isn't practical," Arthur Ashe, then the U.S. Davis Cup captain, told the *Washington Post* in 1985 when asked the Great Grass Question. "I'm just afraid it might get to the point where they just say the hell with this." At the time, Wimbledon officials were driven mad by high-tech tennis shoes transforming their tidy grass into piles of dirt, and they seemed to be fighting a losing battle. Ten years earlier, the U.S. Open had abandoned grass for clay. Then in 1988, the Australian Open moved to Melbourne and a new

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park of hard courts, leaving Wimbledon as the last of the major tournaments played on the sport's traditional surface. Grass had become predictable and boring. Armed with deadly serves, lesser men like Kevin Curren could drub the likes of John McEnroe and Jimmy Connors (Curren beat them both in straights at the 1985 Wimbledon). Ace, service winner, ace, ace—on and on it went, ad nauseam. If the trend continued, many feared, Wimbledon would lose its place atop the tennis world.

Much has changed since then, but in unanticipated, and welcome, ways. For starters, the All England Club did ditch the grass—at least, the grass it used to use. Since 2001, the club has sown its courts with 100 percent perennial ryegrass, rather than a weaker blend of ryegrass and creeping red fescue. The dirt beneath the grass is harder, too, to keep the lawns looking as respectable as possible after two weeks of trampling by the feet of increasingly large athletes. Wimbledon insists that it did not intend to produce slower courts, but one consequence of its turf tinkering is that balls bounce higher on the firmer ground, giving players more options and slightly more time to position themselves.

In no time at all the players adapted to the new grass and made it the sport's premier surface once again. Today's tennis pros swing harder and impart more topspin than those from previous generations, and so the ball bounces higher still on the lawns and allows for longer rallies. They don't follow their serves to the net because their colleagues return so well, and because there is scarcely time to charge behind a ball that is struck at 140 mph. Still, even big lugs like Roddick know the value of a slice—that slick shot of yore—on grass. Volleys have their place, too, as the 31-year-old Tommy Haas proved during his semifinal run this year. Have a good drop shot? It will help you at Wimbledon. So will the lob. So, for that matter, will serve-and-volley, if used wisely. Nadal successfully employed the tactic in the final game of last year's championships, as a desperate Federer floated back returns in the fading light.

Tennis lovers always think that the game has too much of something or too little, that players are too bratty or too dim, that the sport is either so predictable as to be boring (a common swipe at the Federer Era) or so unpredictable as to be maddening (women's tennis in the last few years). But we ought all to agree that the lawns at Wimbledon are perfect. No surface is better suited to the way the sport and the players have evolved. On hard courts, the bounces are true, rather than tricky, and power can more easily snuff out touch and artistry. On clay, endurance carries the day. Only on Wimbledon's lawns do tennis players regularly show us the full range of their talents. It took Roddick four years, several coaches, a remodeled backhand, better volleys, and a diet that trimmed 15 pounds from his body before he was fit for another Wimbledon final after two successive trips in 2004 and 2005. His serve alone, while better than ever, was no longer up to the task.

Still, despite the quality of the tennis seen at Wimbledon in the last few years, it's unlikely we will have a grass-court resurgence. In professional and public tennis, grass courts have been on the decline for years. Other than Wimbledon, only five professional tournaments still use them. Most recreational players have never set foot on a grass court, and the chance of their doing so isn't about to increase. Bob Ingersole, the tennis director at the West Side Tennis Club in Forest Hills, New York, former home of the U.S. Open and a rare spot maintaining some grass courts, explains why:

> Grass is finicky. It needs to be rolled daily, cut twice a week, and the lines need to be painted on twice a week. You have to water grass courts religiously, and when they get too wet you have to add fungicide.

Grass also costs more than clay or hard courts. "One hundred percent more, easy," Ingersole says. He pauses, taps his finger, and then adds, "Easily double, probably triple."

This might have been the best reason for Wimbledon to abandon its lawns. Whatever abuse it might take from local papers and tennis traditionalists around the globe, its tournament would still sell half-a-million tickets, nearly 22,000 towels, dozens of hours of television rights, 200,000 glasses of Pimm's (an increase of 50,000 from 2008, the club reports), and 28,000 kilos of strawberries whether Centre Court was made of grass, granite, or fiberglass. The office might not be as pretty, but the tournament would see its already substantial profit multiply. Digging up the lawns makes good business sense, and that's true for the West Side Tennis Club, too. The club once had 38 grass courts. It now has eight. Yet Ingersole says his club wouldn't be the same without grass, just as Wimbledon wouldn't be Wimbledon, no matter how many times someone like David Lloyd might say otherwise.

"We'll keep grass forever," Ingersole says. Praise him for saying so, and the All England Club for doing the same. ♦

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The Abortion Administration

Here comes federal funding for abortion.

BY MARJORIE DANNENFELSER

In his first week in office, President Obama issued an executive order overturning the Reagan-era Mexico City regulations, which had prohibited American foreign aid from going to organizations that finance overseas abortions. Just a few weeks later, the Gallup organization revealed that the executive order was the single most unpopular action taken by the president during his honeymoon period. At a time when American families had experienced an average 25 percent decline in their net worth, it would appear that increasing the net worth of foreign abortionists was not high on their to-do list.

Their reaction was even less surprising in the light of another recent Gallup finding: For the first time in over 10 years, voters who describe themselves as pro-life have taken the lead (by 51 to 42 percent) over voters who describe themselves as pro-choice. Even this understates antiabortion sentiment, since many people who describe themselves as pro-choice, when probed, favor restrictions on abortion that the present Supreme Court, with its five members who voted for or favor *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey*, would never allow.

Given the breadth of his domestic agenda, the president might want to make a midcourse correction on abortion. Why highlight an issue where the bulk of the American people, including a sizable share of the 52.9 percent of the electorate who voted for him, are either going in the other direction or have severe qualms?

But by now, nearly six months in, the bottom line for Barack Obama is clear. After making a few polite noises about finding "common ground" with pro-lifers, his administration has shown zero interest in doing so. Instead, the Obama agenda is to weave government-backed abortion into the fabric of American life and make it a far more integral part of domestic and foreign policy than ever before.

Exhibit A is the emerging Democratic plan for health reform. At this writing, the draft House bill is the best indicator of where the administration and congressional Democrats are heading. Agreed on by three powerful committee chairmen, Henry Waxman (energy and commerce), George Miller (education and labor), and Charles Rangel (ways and means), the House bill outlines a minimum-benefits package that will be universal—that is, required of every American's insurance plan, whether provided by a private firm or by the government. It lists, among others, two categories: "out-patient hospital services" and "out-patient clinic services."

What services are included under these categories? Is abortion covered? If the drafters of the Democratic bill have their way, this will never be specified in the bill itself. It will be decided by a "Health Benefits Advisory Committee," whose membership will be determined by President Obama and Kathleen Sebelius, the secretary of health and human services who is remembered by Kansas pro-lifers for her gubernatorial vetoes of restrictions on late-term abortions.

Clearly, if Obama's preferred health reform becomes law, abortion will be defined as a "health benefit" automatically provided to every American family. The Hyde amendment, which for more than 30 years has banned federal funding for almost all abortions and has enjoyed overwhelming congressional support, will become all but irrelevant once abortion on demand is defined as a universal "health benefit."

The same relentless agenda recently surfaced locally, as it were, when the president endorsed the repeal of the Dornan amendment. If Obama gets his way on this, the left-liberal District of Columbia government will be free to spend government money on abortions for the first time since 1995. This is apparently what the president has decided our nation's capital needs, given its steadily declining population, low rate of family formation, and recorded legal abortions already nearly equal to the number of its live births.

This vision will be aggressively promoted abroad by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. She recently testified that the administration is promoting "reproductive health," which the secretary acknowledged includes "access to abortion." Recently, the House passed the Foreign Affairs Authorization Act, which if agreed to by the Senate will establish an Office of Global Women's Issues that will deal with "international women's issues." When New Jersey congressman Chris Smith offered an amendment to prohibit the new Office of Global Women's Issues from promoting abortion, he was voted down in committee and the leadership refused to allow the House of Representatives to consider his amendment on the floor.

Why is Obama pushing ahead with such a radical abortion agenda? Since there's no way to accuse him of doing it out of poll-driven opportunism, sincere conviction becomes the most plausible motive. Sometimes the simplest, most straightforward answer makes the most sense. A president who once said he wouldn't want his daughter punished with a baby if she made a mistake is deeply committed to making free and easy access to abortion an inescapable element of American culture. ♦

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Don't worry, son—if they come back with that branding iron, we'll sue their pants off.

So Three Cows Walk into Court . . .

Animal-rights extremism in the Obama entourage is no joke. BY WESLEY J. SMITH

Imagine you are a cattle rancher looking for liability insurance. You meet with your broker, who, as expected, asks a series of questions to gauge your suitability for coverage:

Have you ever been sued by your cattle?

If the answer is yes, what was the outcome of that suit?

Have you received any correspondence or other communication from your herd's legal representatives threatening suit or seeking to redress any legal grievance?

If you think that's a ridiculous scenario, that animals suing their owners could never happen, think again. For years, the animal rights movement has quietly agitated to enact laws, convince the government to promulgate regulations, or obtain a court ruling granting animals the "legal standing" to drag their owners (and others) into court.

Animals are not (yet) legal persons or rights-bearing beings, hence, they lack standing to go to court to seek legal redress. That procedural impediment prevents animal rights activists from attacking animal industries "from within," as, for example, by representing lab rats in class action lawsuits against research labs. This lack of legal standing forces attorneys in the burgeoning field of animal law—who are dedicated to impeding, and eventually destroying, all animal industries—to find other legal pretexts by which to bring their targets directly into court.

In 2006, the Humane Society of the United States—which has no affiliation with local humane societies—brought a lawsuit against Hudson Valley Foie Gras contending the company permitted bird feces to pollute the Hudson River. The Humane Society of the United States isn't an environmental group, so why were they suing about pollution? The answer is that the animal rights group considers its legal adversary to be a "notorious factory farm." But because it had no standing to bring a private case against Hudson Valley as guardians for the farm's ducks, but still wanting to impede the farm's operation, the Humane Society availed itself of the private right to sue directly as permitted under the Clean Water Act.

But imagine if the farm's ducks could sue the farm. The Humane Society or any other animal rights group—who, after all, would be the true litigants—could sue the company into oblivion. Indeed, if animals were granted legal standing, the harm that animal rights activists could do to labs, restaurant chains, mink farms, dog breeders, animal parks, race tracks, etc., would be worse than the destruction wrought by tort lawsuits against the tobacco industry. No wonder animal rights activists salivate at the prospect of animals being allowed to sue.

Animal standing has friends in some surprisingly high places—including potentially at the highest levels of the Obama administration. Senator Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, ranking Republican member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, recently announced he was holding up the confirmation of law professor Cass Sunstein—a close friend of

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the president rumored to be on the fast track for the Supreme Court—as the White House's "regulations czar." The reason: Sunstein explicitly advocates animals' being granted legal standing.

In a 2004 book which he edited, *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions*, Sunstein wrote:

> It seems possible . . . that before long, Congress will grant standing to animals to protect their own rights and interests. . . . Congress might grant standing to animals in their own right, partly to increase the number of private monitors of illegality, and partly to bypass complex inquiries into whether prospective human plaintiffs have injuries in fact [required to attain standing]. Indeed, I believe that in some circumstances, Congress should do exactly that, to provide a supplement to limited public enforcement efforts.

It is worth noting that Sunstein's commitment to animal standing has been sustained over time. He made a similar argument in an article published in the *UCLA Law Review* in 2000. His support for animal rights also extends to an explicit proposal in a 2007 speech to outlaw hunting other than for food, stating, "That should be against the law. It's time now."

The idea of giving animals standing seems to be growing on the political left, perhaps because it would be so harmful to business interests. Laurence H. Tribe, the eminent Harvard Law School professor, has spoken supportively of the concept. On February 8, 2000, less than a year before his Supreme Court appearance on behalf of Vice President Al Gore in the aftermath of the Florida vote controversy, Tribe delivered a speech praising animal rights lawyer Stephen Wise and arguing on behalf of granting animals the right to sue:

> Recognizing that animals themselves by statute as holders of rights would mean that they could sue in their own name and in their own right. . . . Such animals would have what is termed legal standing. Guardians would ultimately have to be appointed to speak for these voiceless rights-holders, just as guardians are appointed today for infants, or for the profoundly retarded. . . . But giving animals this sort of "virtual voice" would go a long way toward strengthening the protection they will receive under existing laws and hopefully improved laws, and our constitutional history is replete with instances of such legislatively conferred standing.

But animal rights lawyers aren't waiting until the law is changed before enlisting animals as litigants. While these efforts have so far been turned back by the courts, they have received respectful hearings on appeal. In 2004, an environmental lawyer sued in the name of the "Cetacean Community"—allegedly consisting of all the world's whales, porpoises, and dolphins—seeking an injunction preventing the federal government from conducting underwater sonar tests. When a trial court found that the "Community" had no standing, the case was appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, where anything can happen. The court refused to grant the whales and dolphins standing, but in language that must have warmed every animal liberationist's heart, it stated that theoretically, animals *could* attain the right to sue:

> Legal standing for animals has friends in some surprisingly high places—including potentially at the highest levels of the Obama administration. Law professor Cass Sunstein, a close friend of the president who has been tapped to serve as the White House's 'regulations czar,' explicitly advocates animals' being granted legal standing 'to protect their own rights and interests.'

> It is obvious that an animal cannot function as a plaintiff in the same manner as a juridically competent human being. But we see no reason why Article III [of the U.S. Constitution] prevents Congress from authorizing suit in the name of an animal any more than it prevents suits brought in the name of artificial persons such as corporations, partnerships or trusts, and even ships, or of juridically incompetent persons such as infants, juveniles and mental incompetents.

Of all the ubiquitous advocacy thrusts by animal rights advocates, obtaining legal standing for animals would be the most damaging—which makes Sunstein's appointment to the overseer of federal regulations so worrisome and Senator Chambliss's hold on the nomination so laudable. Chambliss plans to meet with the nominee personally "to provide him the opportunity to fully explain his views." Chambliss said:

> Professor Sunstein's recommendation that animals should be permitted to bring suit against their owners with human beings as their representatives, is astounding in its display of a total lack of common sense. American farmers and ranchers would face a tremendous threat from frivolous lawsuits. Even if claims against them were found to be baseless in court, they would still bear the financial costs of reckless litigation. That's a cost that would put most family farming and ranching operations out of business.

But animal standing would do more than just plunge the entire animal industry sector into chaos. In one fell swoop, it would both undermine the status of animals as property and elevate them with the force of law toward legal personhood. On an existential level, the perceived exceptional importance of human life would suffer a staggering body blow by erasing one of the clear legal boundaries that distinguishes people from animals. This is precisely the future for which animal rights/liberationists devoutly yearn. ♦

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Out of Alaska

Sarah Palin explains why she resigned the governorship—and what she plans for the future.

Sarah Palin on July 3, the day she announced her resignation as governor of Alaska

NEWSCOM

By Matthew Continetti

In early July, while most Americans were preparing for a long weekend of celebratory parades, charred meats, and noisy fireworks, Sarah Palin made some plans of her own. The Alaska governor had been the object of endless media attention and assorted calumnies since she became John McCain's vice presidential nominee last August. Now she wanted to try something new. So, on July 3, in a speech delivered from her home on Lake Lucille in Wasilla, Palin told her constituents that not only would she not seek a second term, but she would also be transferring authority to Lieutenant Governor Sean Parnell on July 26, abdicating her office with about 18 months left to go. The announcement, as one might expect, received global press coverage, dominated the weekend headlines, and gave stories about the late Michael Jackson a run for their money. Meantime, the political world went into sustained convulsions.

Matthew Continetti is the associate editor of The Weekly Standard. *His* The Persecution of Sarah Palin *will be published by Penguin Sentinel in 2010.*

The fierce reaction surprised Palin. She is acutely aware of what the media and her opponents say about her. She heard some people say that the timing of her speech was odd. Not so. "Independence Day is so significant to me—it's sort of a way for me to illustrate that I want freedom for Alaskans to progress, and for me personally," she told me during a telephone interview on July 9. Others said the motivation for her resignation was not clear. "I'm like, 'Holy Jeez, I spoke for 20 minutes'" giving reasons, she said. Bloggers conjectured that a horrible scandal was looming over her. Nope. Palin says she even heard a rumor that she resigned because pornographic pictures of her were about to hit the Internet. This left her bemused. "Between which pregnancies did I get to pose for those?" she said sarcastically. The obstinacy of her enemies, the fact that they consistently attribute bad-faith to her and accuse her of double-speaking, continues to mystify her. Hearing all the innuendo, Palin said to herself, "Really? You can't just believe what I'm saying?"

One thing you quickly learn about Sarah Palin when you study her career is that she never, ever does things by the book. The lady knows how to make a splash. She specializes in surprise announcements. Her 2004 resigna-

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tion from the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, her 2005 declaration that she was challenging incumbent Frank Murkowski for the Republican gubernatorial nomination, her March 2008 revelation that she was seven months pregnant with her fifth child, then her August 2008 addition to the GOP presidential ticket and the subsequent shocker that her 17-year-old daughter was pregnant: All galvanized public opinion and upset established patterns of doing business.

Palin likes gambles. Her career is filled with firsts. In 2006, Palin became the first woman governor in Alaska history (as well as the youngest). In 2008, she became the first woman to appear on a GOP presidential ballot. And on July 3, she probably became the first governor with a 54-percent approval rating to resign from office for reasons having nothing to do with scandal or appointment to another job.

Palin says she had been thinking about her decision for a while, and had talked to various people about it. In January, during her state of the state address to the Alaska legislature, she asked lawmakers to put the previous year's election behind them. "I asked them not to allow those distractions that were on the periphery to hamper the state's progress," Palin told me. But her plea went unheeded. "It became obvious in the last months especially that too many people weren't going to ignore those things on the periphery," she said. As the months passed, Palin arrived at the conclusion that she didn't want a second term as Alaska's governor. She had achieved what she had set out to do, so why bother with one more lame-duck legislative session in 2010? "I know that we've accomplished more in our two years in office than most governors could hope to accomplish in two terms," Palin said. "And that's because I hired the right people." For Palin to remain shuttling between Juneau, Anchorage, and Wasilla would waste both her and her constituents' time. And "I cannot waste time," she said. "I cannot waste resources."

Before the announcement, Palin gave no public sign that she was thinking of resigning. When I visited Alaska in May, I heard widespread speculation that the governor would not run for reelection, but no one mentioned the possibility that she would resign. That announcement, Palin's sometime pollster David Dittman told me last week, was "out of the blue." Alaska's next governor, Sean Parnell, reportedly found out that he was getting a promotion only a few days prior to Palin's announcement. The Alaska GOP chairman, Randy Ruedrich, who has clashed with Palin in the past, also expressed surprise. When I asked another plugged-in Alaska Republican for comment on Palin's decision, the response was, "Where do I begin?"

Palin's unconventionality and authenticity is the key to her appeal. She may move contrariwise to elite opinion in Washington and New York, but doing so strengthens her bond with conservative Republicans across the country. The things that make liberals flip-out at the first mention of Palin are exactly the ones that rally conservatives to her side. Liberals view Palin's resignation as a sign of weakness. Conservatives view it as attractive nonconformity. "To her credit," Dittman said, "she just didn't tip off a few people and go through the motions for a year and a half."

The obstinacy of her enemies, the fact that they consistently attribute bad-faith to her and accuse her of double-speaking, continues to mystify Palin. Hearing all the innuendo, she said to herself, 'Really? You can't just believe what I'm saying?'

Why is Palin leaving? At this writing, there is no reason to doubt her stated position: Her enemies' concerted efforts to tear her down have caused her family financial stress and distracted her from her duties as governor. Since she returned to Alaska in November 2008, she has been hemmed in. Ethics complaints, insults, invective, undue attention, and legal bills have been all-consuming. "I can't fight for what's right when I'm shackled to the governor's seat," Palin said. For the last seven months the governor's office has been a ward. A trap. She is breaking free.

Palin likes to say "everything changed" for her on August 29, 2008, the day she was introduced as John McCain's running mate. That may be an understatement. Before then, Palin was an extremely popular governor known to Alaskans as a bipartisan reformer and a champion of clean government. Outside Alaska, she was almost completely unknown. When she strode onstage with McCain that August day in Dayton, Ohio, the only thing the global media knew for sure about Palin was that she opposed abortion and recently had given birth to a child with Down's syndrome. Since then, Democrats and the press have done everything in their power to transform this populist hero into a gun-toting, idiotic, apocalyptic harpy.

Last year, in the space of eight weeks, the media said Palin was a Buchananite (she wasn't), a member of the

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Alaska Independence party (nope), a book-banner (wrong again), and a biblical literalist who believed dinosaurs roamed the Earth several thousand years ago (an utter fabrication). When it wasn't mangling facts, the press did its best to undermine Palin's accomplishments, from selling Governor Murkowski's jet to finally pulling the plug on the Bridge to Nowhere to pushing through a natural gas pipeline with bipartisan support. The denizens of leftwing fever swamps accused Palin of infidelity and questioned her most recent pregnancy. Feminist activists denied Palin her womanhood because she did not share their politics. Comedians made fun of her accent, clothes, smarts, and good looks. And in a craven attempt to preserve their ties to the media, the campaign operatives who had promoted Palin to John McCain later turned on her, telling reporters (on background, of course) that Palin was an incompetent "rogue" "diva" who may have been suffering from postpartum depression.

Palin-hatred is visceral and unrelenting. "Our state was inundated with opposition researchers trying to dig up dirt, the Democratic blogosphere up here making stuff up," Palin told me. The file on my desktop labeled "Insult List" is an attempt to track every foul thing that's been said about Sarah Palin since she rose to national prominence. At the moment, the list is seven single-spaced pages long. Palin's been called, among other things, a "bimbo," a "cancer," a "farce," a "jack in the box," a "provincial," a "maniac," an "airhead," "Lady Gaga," and "political slime." And that's just a small taste of the G-rated stuff. The blue material is far worse.

Palin looked authentic and commanding in her speech to the 2008 Republican National Convention. It is not an exaggeration to say that her address there was one of the most effective political communications ever.

Unable or unwilling to grasp her true accomplishments and character, the media shoehorned Palin into a ready-made caricature of the know-nothing Christian PTA mom who enters politics because of "those damned lib'ruls." The reality is far different. Palin is a savvy and charismatic politician whose career has been filled with courageous stands against entrenched authority. Ideological or partisan attachments do not concern her. She has her flaws—who doesn't?—but they should be measured against her strengths. Instead the media ignored the positives and colluded with Palin's adversaries to reduce her to a cartoon.

The attacks did not stop when McCain and Palin lost the election. To the contrary: They shifted location and emphasis. Palin returned to a changed Alaska. Her first year in office had been remarkably successful because she governed with an ad hoc legislative coalition of Democrats and antiestablishment Republicans. That coalition broke down the moment Palin became a force in national politics and the most famous woman (probably the most famous person) in the Republican party. The Democrats in the legislature defected en masse. Compounding the problem: Because she had unseated it, the GOP establishment never liked Palin and wanted her to go away.

Suddenly "people were confronted with policy differences with the governor," Alaska state senator and Palin ally Gene Therriault told me. "The call went out from the national Democratic party to take her down. Some of the Democrats who worked with her previously took their marching orders." Gridlock ensued. Bipartisan comity was no more.

Anybody who had the opportunity to score political po ints against Palin took a shot. The Alaska judicial council, a body that recommends jurists to the governor, forced the pro-life Palin to appoint a pro-choice judge to the state supreme court. The legislature rejected Palin's choice for state attorney general. The governor and the legislature fought protracted battles over the replacement for Democratic state senator Kim Elton (appointed to the Obama administration) and stimulus money from the federal government. Civility with the legislature became untenable. John Coale, the Washington, D.C.-based Democratic lawyer who set up Palin's political action committee and legal defense fund, told me, "Something had to change."

The problem wasn't so much Palin as it was Alaska. She had become too big for her home state. Bizarrely, her celebrity did not expand her political capital but erased it. The knives were out, and you could hear the sound of still more sharpening in the distance.

The moment warranted a bold move. John Bitney, a former Palin aide who has known the governor since they were in junior high, told me that in times like these Palin seeks spiritual and familial counsel. "Sarah Palin on a personal level is driven by spiritual guidance that has taken her to where she is today," he wrote in an email exchange last week.

Bitney, whom Palin let go over personal differences in 2007, is worth quoting at length. "While she has learned to accept that guidance—she often alludes to it in her statements—she probably can't explain it fully," Bitney wrote. "And I am assuming that guidance is now apparently telling her it's time to heal herself, her family, and

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Palin acknowledges the crowd before her speech to the Republican National Convention on September 3, 2008

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get grounded for whatever the future holds. I can tell you that I have learned to respect her guidance (wherever it comes from), for it has given her strength and direction to some unparalleled political heights."

Alaska ties down Palin in multiple ways. The state's distance from the rest of America makes it difficult to travel to major cities (or small caucus and primary states) in the continental United States without a hefty time commitment and scheduling effort. So far this year, every time Palin traveled outside Alaska, her enemies inside the state pilloried her for neglecting her job. This is a standard that applied neither to George W. Bush, who traveled the country campaigning for president while he was still Texas governor, nor to Barack Obama, who spent two of his four years as a U.S. senator from Illinois running for president. Palin chafes at this inconsistency and still isn't used to the idea that a different standard applies to her.

Then there are the ethics complaints. Practically everything Palin has done since returning home has been politicized by her enemies and, in some cases, criminalized. The moment she knew there would be trouble, Palin said, was when she returned to the governor's office in Juneau after the November election. The gaggle of reporters assembled there asked her a few questions about the campaign. Palin answered them. Almost immediately, an ethics charge was filed against her for conducting political business from her state office. "That was part of the Democratic plan to grind her up," state senator Therriault said. "Use the ethics law as a blunt instrument to club the administration."

In her July 3 speech, Palin mentioned 15 ethics complaints leveled against her. The *Anchorage Daily News* counts 18. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that Palin's office has been inundated with 150 FOIA requests for information regarding her schedule and contacts. Her staff is spending its time as unwilling participants in a giant fishing expedition. "They knew how to file these," Palin said. "They knew what category to file them under. We got the fake people, we got the people filing online."

The charges are frivolous. Some are just silly. One complaint said Palin violated the law by mentioning her vice presidential candidacy on her state website. Another said that her wearing a T-shirt with the insignia of Todd Palin's sponsor in the Iron Dog snow-machine race constituted a conflict of interest. "It's a cold, outdoor event," Palin said.

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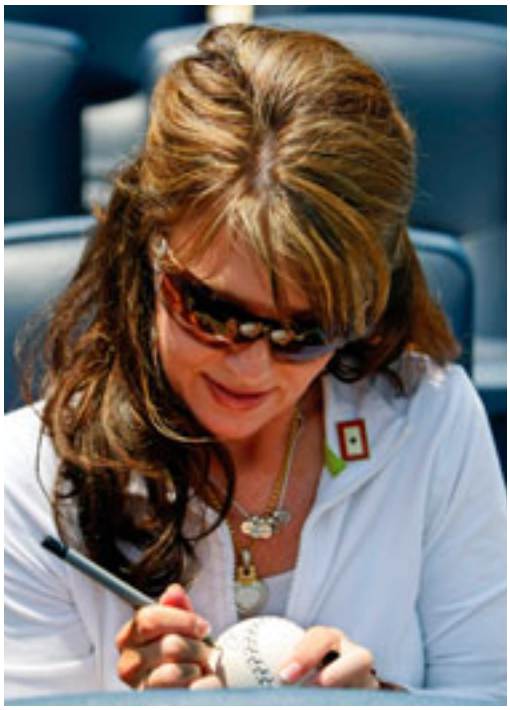
"I've been wearing Arctic Cat gear for many years. I wear a Carhartt coat and commercial fishing bibs, too." Yet another complaint was filed under the name of a character from a British soap opera. One suspected it was only a matter of time before someone complained on behalf of the turkey who was decapitated in the background as Palin gave a television interview last Thanksgiving.

The state personnel board has dismissed the complaints, one after the other. According to the governor, however, when all is said and done—when one factors in all the wasted time and resources—the cost to Alaska amounts to some $2 million. "Why would I continue to put Alaskans through that?" Palin said. Furthermore, because state ethics law requires the accused to pay for her own defense, the Palins' personal legal bills add up to around $500,000. The Palins aren't poor, but they aren't rich, either. Paying off the debt will take some effort. If Palin remained in office until the end of her term, the bills would just grow.



Palin signs a baseball for at Yankee Stadium in June

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Some of the charges were so silly that Palin wanted to pay the fines and move on. "I got to the point where I said, 'May I just plead guilty?'" she told me. But pleading guilty would have been political suicide. Palin's opponents in the legislature would have moved to impeach her on the flimsiest of pretexts. She had to fight it out, whether or not it was costing her money and peace of mind. "In politics you're either eating well or sleeping well," Palin said. "I want to be able to sleep well."

The accusations affected Palin emotionally. A rare and necessary talent for a great politician is the capacity to ignore or laugh off the critics' most vicious assaults. FDR had it. So did Reagan. When Palin spoke at the 2008 Republican convention, it seemed as though she had it, too. Her commanding performance gave the impression that the previous week's falsehoods, exaggerations, myths, insults, and smears did not matter to her. Not one bit.

This doesn't seem to be the case anymore, however. Over time, the attacks on Palin—on her character, intellect, appearance, femininity, and family—clearly got to her. One associate told me that, after the election, Palin made a habit of listening to talk radio, attempting to track what pundits were saying about her. Her Momma Grizzly instincts came out whenever her sons and daughters were mentioned. In January, she gave a rare interview to the libertarian documentary filmmaker John Ziegler on media bias. She could hardly give a speech in which she did not mention elite condescension and her ill-treatment at the hands of Katie Couric and leftwing bloggers. Her public performances became personal testimonials to the damage the media can inflict on a person's reputation and career. Palin was right, of course. But these were arguments for polemicists to make, not statesmen.

Palin thought she could respond to every attack. But no one can respond to every attack. Nor should they. Hatred and slander aimed at the people who disagree with you is a lamentable yet unremarkable fact of American politics. The vitriol is the heap of dirty laundry in the corner of a room that everybody pretends to ignore. A politician just has to live with the smell.

Palin is not a normal politician, however. For one thing, she is a newcomer to the national arena. The bulk of her career has been at the local and state level, where the stakes and the tempers are low compared with the rock 'em, sock 'em dramas that play out inside the Beltway and on the cable channels and blogs. "Everyone else in '08 had been in the game for decades," John Coale said. "They all had been there. This was somebody playing for the first time." For Palin, the hostility directed at her was novel and shocking. Because she prides herself on her unconventionality, and because she knows how to win a political knife-fight, she decided to fight back.

The turning point came in June. On June 3, Palin introduced the conservative radio talk-show host Michael Reagan at a dinner in Anchorage. In her introduction, Palin clumsily paraphrased from articles by Newt Gingrich and author Craig Shirley. Palin attributed the statements to Gingrich and Shirley, but she was a little sloppy in doing so. Predictably, a leftwing blogger soon took to the *Huffington Post*—a virtual coffee klatch for Palin-haters—claiming that the governor was guilty of plagiarism.

The charge did not go unanswered. Palin's lawyer issued a statement saying that the blogger's accusation

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was ridiculous, which it was, especially considering that *both* the current president and vice president are known to have lifted passages from other politicians in the past without any attribution whatsoever. Both Gingrich and Shirley said no plagiarism had occurred. The round went to Palin.

Next, on June 8, the late-night comedian David Letterman made a partisan, crude, and unfunny joke involving baseball star Alex Rodriguez and Palin's underage daughter Willow. The former had "knocked up" the latter, Letterman said, on the Palins' recent trip to New York City. (In his monologue, Letterman also said Palin had a "slutty flight-attendant look.") Palin didn't watch the show, but the next day a reporter asked for her reaction. When the reporter read the joke to her, Palin was taken aback. She called it disgusting. What happened next shocked her even more. "The reaction to my candid and heartfelt response blew me away," Palin said. "I all of a sudden became the bad guy. Who says I don't have the right to give a candid and heartfelt response? The reaction to it really opened my eyes: This is *ridiculous*. You're damned if you do and damned if you don't."

Palin demanded that Letterman apologize. She defended her position on the airwaves. Less than a week later, Letterman said the nasty crack actually had been directed at Palin's 18-year-old daughter Bristol, as though that made it any less tasteless. Then Letterman admitted he'd been wrong to make the joke in the first place. Palin had won again.

In late June, an Alaska Democratic blogger pasted the face of a pro-Palin radio talk-show host on the body of Palin's son Trig. The governor's camp released a withering statement, saying, "The mere idea of someone doctoring the photo of a special needs baby is appalling. To learn that two Alaskans did it is absolutely sickening. . . . Babies and children are off limits." The blogger backtracked. She said she only had intended to ridicule the talk show host, like that made any difference. "What if I hadn't responded?" Palin said. "Well, then, the criticism would be, can't you stand up for the special needs community?" The constant bickering and shifting standards rankled her. "Well, enough is enough," she said. "I would like the opportunity to speak up and speak out."

Palin's new combativeness is pronounced. When she announced her resignation, the Internet rumor mill went into high gear. Lefty bloggers could not countenance the idea that the woman to whom they devote such enmity might actually be resigning for her stated reasons alone. There must be some other story, they wrote, some other snowshoe waiting to drop. The CNN anchor Rick Sanchez speculated on air that Palin might be pregnant. The Alaska blogger Shannyn Moore wrote on the *Huffington Post* that Palin resigned because she was "under federal investigation" for self-dealing in the construction of a recreation center in Wasilla. Other liberal bloggers parroted Moore's baseless accusations. Palin's team wasted no time in issuing a statement from the governor's lawyer that shot down Moore's blog. "We will be exploring legal options this week to address such defamation," the lawyer wrote. The FBI also came out and said Palin was not the subject of an investigation. Another malicious story batted down.

Over time, the attacks on Palin—on her character, intellect, appearance, femininity, and family—clearly got to her. She could hardly give a speech in which she did not mention elite condescension and her ill-treatment at the hands of the media.

Palin had made a clear decision to defend her family's honor. "The toll on her family from all the events over the past three years has been extraordinary," John Bitney wrote in his email to me. "She had a baby, Bristol had a baby, Track was sent overseas, and no doubt Piper and Willow have all the day-to-day issues that come from young women growing up." The parade of outrages against her and her children didn't help.

Yet a politician's job is to serve her constituents, not bicker with comedians. Palin has been caught in a bind. Her global celebrity has been in tension with her duties to Alaska. Had she remained in office, the tension would have become more pronounced. Meanwhile, the agenda on which she defeated Frank Murkowski has been enacted into law. One more year in office would mean additional legal bills and constant juggling between the demands of family, work, and fame. The job had become demanding and unpleasant.

So Palin let go.

Palin has begun ramping up her criticism of President Obama. "Somebody's got to start asking President Obama questions" about how he plans to pay for his agenda, Palin said. In her July 3 speech, she blasted "debt-ridden stimulus dollars," said that "today's Big Government spending" is "immoral and doesn't even make economic sense," and called the national debt "obscene."

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In an interview last week with *Time* magazine, she called cap-and-trade "cap-and-tax," and said the policy would "drive the cost of consumer goods and cost of energy so extremely high that our nation is going to start exporting even more jobs to China." I asked Palin about President Obama's response to the democratic upheaval in Iran. "Maybe they're tougher behind closed doors," she said. She noted that there were plenty of things "the most powerful man in the world" could do to help bring down Ahmadinejad, including a new round of international sanctions. She went after Obama's rhetoric. "It's not 'meddling' in another country's business when you understand that what happens over there affects us over here," she said. "I wish Obama was tougher in that area."

Speculation about Sarah Palin's presidential ambitions is premature. She herself probably does not know her next move. There is a strong chance that the unpredictable Palin may decide against running for any office, ever. You never know. But since the presidency so captivates Americans, and since the most recent vice presidential nominee has as much of a claim on the next presidential nomination as anyone, "Palin for President" (*Tippecanoe and Piper too!*) stories will be around for years to come.

Did Palin's surprise resignation help her chances? The flippant answer is, "Check back in four years, bub." The serious answer is, "There's no strong consensus one way or the other." When Palin announced her resignation, the conventional wisdom immediately gelled behind the position that she could no longer win the GOP presidential nomination in 2012. Maybe. Slowly and haltingly, however, an alternative theory emerged that said the move might not damage Palin as much as the establishment believed it would.

The polling evidence seems to confirm this. So far, Palin's fans have viewed her decision not to seek reelection sympathetically. A Gallup poll released on July 8 recorded that 67 percent of Republicans wanted Palin to have a role as a national political figure. A Rasmussen poll from last week found that Mitt Romney, Palin, and Mike Huckabee are in a statistical tie for the nomination.

Palin has a devoted following. No Republican politician energizes GOP crowds as much as she does. When I saw her speak at the Vanderburgh County Right to Life dinner in Evansville, Indiana, in April, Palin was practically mobbed by well-wishers and autograph seekers. The conservative movement is rudderless, and social conservatives in particular would like a powerful spokesman for their cause. The social issues may not have played much of a role during Palin's governorship, but once she is free from office she can emphasize them as much as she likes.

One lesson from Barack Obama's candidacy is that a politician should seize his (or her) moment. Elite opinion, remember, thought that Barack Obama wasn't ready to run for president in 2008. He should sit back, the argument went. Gain seasoning. Master a few issues. Wait for his turn. But Obama understood that when you do that, you end up being Joe Biden. Obama understood that once the spotlight is on you, it's foolish to let it pass on to someone else. He ignored the naysayers. He launched his campaign. Now he lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Reagan's late campaign manager John Sears had a term to describe what voters look for in a presidential candidate. The term was "appropriateness." Sears meant that John Q. Public wants to support the guy that best fits his mental picture of what a president should be. Does Palin have such "appropriateness"? The verdict is mixed. Certainly there's a latent hunger for a viable female presidential candidate who isn't Hillary Clinton. Palin, moreover, looked authentic and commanding in her speech to the 2008 Republican National Convention. It is not an exaggeration to say that her address there was one of the most effective political communications ever. In the vice presidential debate, Palin went toe-to-toe with Biden, the paradigmatic Beltway insider, and gave as good as—if not better than—she got.

Throughout her career, Palin has seemed most "appropriate" at moments when she senses that the populace is diverging from the political class that rules over it. Palin exploits the split and wins office as the tribune of the people. That is what happened when she saw that Wasillans were tired of the nonideological, nonpartisan, unexciting mayoralty of John Stein; when she saw self-dealing among Republican insiders in Anchorage and Juneau; when she saw that Alaskans were tired of Frank Murkowski and the lobbyist culture he nursed and protected. That is what she and John McCain tried to do last year, when Americans had grown tired of George W. Bush and Republican misrule (things didn't work out the way they'd hoped). The next time Palin sees a gap separating the people and their government, she may try to jump in and fill it.

For now, though, Palin will focus on writing her book, on the midterm elections, and on giving speeches. One certainty is that neither she nor the people who love and hate her are going away. "It's not retreat," Palin said. "It's moving more aggressively than ever to fight for what's right." Today the Palinistas and Palinphobes are as much a part of the national scene as they have been part of Alaska's. Since her debut, Palin has sparked curiosity and revulsion, devotion and illwill, admiration and scorn in equal measure. For whatever reason, the press cannot take its unblinking eye off of her. To the media and her detractors, she is a force of nature. She cannot be ignored.

The obsession is sure to intensify. Be prepared. Hurricane Sarah is about to descend on the Lower 48. ♦

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On Top of a Volcano

The Iranian regime, after the crackdown

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

As Ali Fathi, the pseudonymous Iranian journalist for Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, has sadly observed, the most fearful words inside his homeland are now *Gom shodeh* ("he has disappeared"). In 1999 during student demonstrations against the regime, Fathi himself vanished into the country's secret prisons. He and some other lucky inmates eventually emerged. Many, like Fathi, left Iran, despairing of their future and remembering the fear and loneliness of being unpersons in the Islamic republic's gulag. The regime probably believed until the elections of this past June 12 that it had eliminated the 1990s reform movement that blossomed under the presidency of Mohammed Khatami. Ali Khamenei, the regime's clerical generalissimo, now knows how difficult it is to suppress an increasingly vibrant democratic ethic that is championed by men who helped make the Islamic revolution.

Iran has not seen so much tumult since 1979. It is an odd twist of fate that, at the very moment when a wide swath of the Iranian people want an end to dictatorship, we have an American president who seeks to make peace with the country's supreme leader—if Khamenei would only make peace with him. True, every president since Ronald Reagan has been eager to get beyond the Islamic revolution. If Khamenei had ever sent his globe-trotting emissary Ali Larijani to Europe with an offer of a high-level, confidential chat, you can rest assured that George W. Bush would have had Colin Powell or Condoleezza Rice on the plane to Geneva. (And he would have been right to do so.) This never happened because Khamenei and others—probably including many of the reformists who are now challenging Khamenei's rule—really do believe that the United States is "the Great Satan," "Satan Incarnate," "Global Arrogance," and "the Enemy of all Muslims."

The Obama administration is distressed by what has unfolded in Tehran. The president's tempered response to the demonstrations gradually approached outrage as Khamenei started crushing the protesters. Unfortunately there is little the United States can do to reinforce Iran's growing democratic tendencies. But there are things it definitely should not do, and President Barack Obama seems poised to err profoundly and dangerously.

Before discussing strategy and tactics, however, it is necessary to understand why the Islamic republic is irreversibly in transition, and why the internal tension that exploded after June 12 with a force few foresaw won't go away, despite the crackdown and despite behind-the-scenes efforts by Iran's two great political clerics—Khamenei and his brother-in-arms-turned foe, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani—to restore stability to the Islamic republic.

When trying to understand clerical Iran, the first thing Americans need to realize is that this is not simply a Middle Eastern Muslim power that harbors some negotiable grudge against the United States. George W. Bush's "axis of evil" speech, like the CIA-backed 1953 coup against Iran's secular nationalist prime minister, is only a footnote to the religious-ideological aversion that the Islamic republic's elite has for America. When Khamenei and Larijani say they can see no difference between President Obama and his predecessors, they are being analytically accurate. For someone who believes in the Islamic revolution—who sees Iran as the vanguard Islamic nation, led by clerics who will keep the country on the divinely revealed "straight path"—abandoning the struggle against Obama's America would be the ultimate betrayal of God.

Yet President Obama so far does not appear to understand Khamenei and his allies nearly as well as they understand him. For Obama, who has turned his ecumenical autobiography, *Dreams from My Father*, into foreign policy, religion is not central to identity. As the French Arabist Gilles Kepel astutely noted in *Le Monde*, the president tried to "Americanize" Islam in his Cairo speech last month, to transform the Middle East's defining religion into something that could cohabit amicably with the West's secularized and latitudinarian creeds. Born to a fallen-away Muslim father (a sad turn of events for a faithful Muslim) and a secular mother, Obama joined a Christian church as an adult. In Cairo he promised to stand guard over Islam, to ensure that Westerners do not insult the faith. President Obama's history- and culture-bending speech was capti-

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vating, and for the *tiers-mondiste* crowd in the Middle East and the West who like their American oratory punctuated with apologies, it was heavenly music. But for Iran's faithful disciples of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, it had no appeal. Khamenei immediately attacked Obama for his arrogance.

Perhaps Obama will revise his views. He and the rest of us are witnessing the *gom shodeh* years of Iran's painful escape from theocracy. During the postelection protests, Khamenei gave shoot-to-kill orders to his security services. At least 20 individuals have so far died. Neither the Revolutionary Guard Corps, the regime's praetorians, nor its more thuggish appendage, the Basij, has shown any sign of siding with the opposition. The regime has not repeated the mistakes of the shah: Where the Pahlavi king had only the imperial army to keep order, Khamenei has numerous security units with their own chains of command. No one seems to know who actually controls the Robocop anti-riot units, which Tehranis often call *merrikhiyan* ("Martians"). Iranians I've spoken to tell of Azeri Turkish-speaking security forces, perhaps from the provinces of Qazvin and Zanjan, being deployed in Persian-speaking areas of Tehran—a time-tested imperial practice, using "foreigners" against the natives.

It's increasingly difficult to believe that President Obama really thinks he can stop Tehran's quest for a bomb with diplomacy and sanctions.

Iran's religiously grounded authoritarianism has again driven the country's angry educated youth from the streets and progressive voices from the press. The bravest of the demonstrators will continue to annoy the security forces, but probably won't seriously challenge them. Prominent dissidents and hitherto loyal members of the establishment are being forced to confess their conspiracies and errors of judgment. Most of Iran's most senior ayatollahs, who have never shown any affection for Khamenei, have not actively thrown their support to Mir-Hussein Mousavi, the runner-up in the rigged elections and the de facto leader of the opposition.

Prime minister during the war with Iraq (1980-88), Mousavi continues to reject the balloting, and has strongly implied that the whole structure of dictatorial government with Khamenei's office at the pinnacle—not just the election results—is illegitimate. The odds are good that Khamenei, who has so far refrained from damning Mousavi by name, will make him pay dearly for the assault on the regime. Mousavi's lack of charisma—he makes John Glenn seem an inspiring speaker—has hurt any effort to develop a coherent opposition movement. Mousavi never had his own electoral organization—he just borrowed personnel and tactics from former president Mohammed Khatami, who during his eight years in office (1997-2005) also failed to develop an organization to match his ambitions. Khatami, like Mousavi, has shown some guts in opposing Khamenei (in Khatami's case, it's a notable change from his past meekness in front of the supreme leader). But whether the former prime minister, who probably didn't expect to win the presidential elections and was as shocked as everyone else by the magnitude and passion of the demonstrations after June 12, has the fortitude to continue his stand given the regime's fondness for targeting family members of dissidents is open to question.

The regime has regained control of the streets. Barring the unexpected (security forces shoot dead someone in one of Tehran's vast, impoverished neighborhoods, provoking a riot), Mousavi surely knows that Khamenei has, for now, decisively outflanked him. Hope for reform again appears a long-term affair: Where once Iranians—especially the highly Westernized ones who are the sources for most Western journalists and academics—could believe in the possibility of perceptible, progressive change, they now see little prospect of peaceful evolution.

In America, some within the administration are already insisting the June 12 election doesn't fundamentally change America's national-security interests vis-à-vis the Islamic republic. And recent events are unlikely to change the timeline for the clerical regime to manufacture a nuclear weapon. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen's recent conjecture that Tehran would have the bomb in one to three years still seems reasonable.

Iranians, however, may be closer to the end of the *gom shodeh* period than they are to its beginning. The clerical establishment is probably irretrievably fractured. We can already see Iranians referring to the aftermath of the elections as a *fitna*, an Arabic word that sends tremors through any faithful Muslim. Best translated as "schism," it recalls the violent convulsions that began with the death of the third caliph in 656 and continued for five years until the death of Ali, the fourth caliph and the spiritual father of Shiite Islam. It connotes a blood feud, if not a civil war, among the faithful, a spiritual upheaval that can put the community into a moral free fall. *Fitna* is not necessarily a bad thing for Shiites, whose faith is in great part defined by rebellions and martyrs. But *fitna* is always traumatic, touching the believer's most elemental identity. The West-

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ern media have tended to depict the struggle in Iran as pitting the young against the old, the more secular against the more religious, the affluent against the poor, and the countryside against the city. But those dichotomies don't adequately capture either the tense politico-religious competition or the source of friction least tied to religion, the mistrust between the better educated and the poorly educated.

The clergy too are divided. On one side are those who support Khamenei and, more important, the authoritarian idea of *hukumat-e adl-e islami* ("a government of Islamic justice"). On the other side are those who are convinced that Khamenei and the dictatorial clerical system are harmful to the clergy as an institution, which ultimately depends on the respect and faith of the people. These mullahs, like the layman Mousavi, want to see established a *hukumat-e jumhuri-e islami* ("Islamic republican government").

Among the latter are those jurists who increasingly find the rule of one cleric—one rather mediocre cleric—over all others to be intolerably offensive. Iran's mullahs do not shout this out: The Special Clerical Court that prosecutes and jails refractory members of the brotherhood has often been a busy place. But the views of dissident and unhappy mullahs become known, even in the clergy's cloistered, deeply fraternal world. Where Khamenei's allies are either explicitly hostile to the idea of democracy or believe it needs to be closely monitored by Islamic jurists, the opposing side is more open to the idea of representative government, if nonetheless nervous about how untutored laymen, especially those of little faith, may vote.

The influence of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, Iraq's preeminent cleric and probably the most respected Shiite jurist in the world, comes into play here. Iranian clerics have been free to go to Iraq on pilgrimage and for study since the fall of Saddam Hussein, and some Iranian clerics in Iraq will tell you flatly that what they admire most about Sistani is that so many Iraqi Shiites voluntarily follow his advice.

Sistani, an Iranian by birth who still speaks Arabic with a Persian accent, has embraced democracy in Iraq even though he and many of his fellow clerics in the holy city of Najaf are no doubt worried about where democracy, with its potential for moral relativism, will eventually carry their flock. There is not a single cleric in Iran who can command the allegiance—or street power—of Sistani. Skeptics of Sistani will tell you that the grand ayatollah is being coopted by access to Iranian state funds (and he has undoubtedly received money from Tehran). Given Sistani's preeminent position in Iraq, and how much he's been able to do with how little (in 2003 he humbled American viceroy L. Paul Bremer and George W. Bush with little cash in the till), it's doubtful this is a serious worry. What's interesting is the reverse: the potential appeal in Iran of the Iraqi model—the cultural and religious authority that comes from the Shiite tradition of keeping a certain distance from power, combined with a modern, moral embrace of democracy.

Although Iran's clerics have increasingly become wards of the state, they do not view themselves as bureaucrats. The old adage about mullahs—that all they do is talk, have sex, and eat—may well be true of most. The clerics behind Khamenei, like those behind Mousavi—and like their lay counterparts on both sides—may be what a wise and deeply jaded Iranian informant, who has spent much of his life in the company of clerics, bemoaned: "Just a bunch of corrupt bastards." (His emphasis was not on their pecuniary inclinations.) Iranians who have spent a great deal of time with clerics often see only their earthy qualities.

But clerics think they are more than the sum of their mundane parts. They really do see themselves as the representatives of the "Imam of all Time" (the Mahdi), the custodians of a holy trust. When Ayatollah Mohammed Yazdi, a truly hard-line member of the election-monitoring Guardian Council and the head of the Teachers' Association of the Qom Seminary, recently gave a strong defense of clerical supremacy in politics by stressing the clergy's connection to the Mahdi, he wasn't joking. His defense of Khamenei's credentials for supreme leadership strained credulity, but that he saw himself and Khamenei as part of a bulwark against disbelief is beyond question. Yazdi's statement, which emphasized Muslims' obligation to submit to God's will—that is, Khamenei's rule—seemed especially bald because the threat to the status quo, on the streets of Tehran and probably within the classrooms of Qom, was real.

As much as Yazdi might not like it, the mullahs' image of themselves is still intimately connected to how their peers perceive them, how many students they can attract, and how many average faithful Iranians recognize them as authorities worthy of emulation. Iran's mullahs are not blind: They are well aware that those among them who've become identified with Khamenei are not (with a couple of interesting exceptions) the religious authorities most admired. Traditional clerics, whom Khamenei riles with his pretension to know God's will and the national interest, are slowly but surely aligning themselves with Qom's constitutional and democratic traditions, which began to germinate during the 1905 revolution against a despotic shah.

The educational and generational divide may be the most telling in defining Mousavi and Ahmadinejad sup-

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porters, and it is working in favor of the progressives. Clerics' children are as well educated as any group in the country. As the Franco-Iranian sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar revealed in his book *Avoir vingt ans au pays des ayatollahs* ("To Be Twenty in the Land of the Ayatollahs"), Qom's youth have been rapidly modernizing since 1979. Clerics under 40 just might be one of Mousavi's biggest fan clubs. Against all of this, Khamenei has wealth and power, the timidity and corruption of many mullahs, and the clerical fear of change that was once an asset of the shah's against Khomeini. This tug-of-war can't go away.

It is possible that former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and his circle of friends, family, acolytes, and parasites will provide another shock to the system. This would be odd, since Rafsanjani belongs to neither the "Islamic justice" nor the "Islamic republican" tradition, although his sympathies and personal interests align more closely with the latter. With the possible exception of Khamenei, who does not appear to be personally corrupt, Rafsanjani is the richest man in Iran. He is all by himself a third force within the clerical establishment. Where he and Khamenei were once revolutionary brothers, they have become increasingly bitter antagonists.

In the early post-Khomeini years, Khamenei and Rafsanjani shared power more generously. Although not without friction, they were a team.

Khamenei's preeminence has probably driven Rafsanjani nuts (before the revolution Rafsanjani was the better trained, and he is certainly the cleverer, man). In the early post-Khomeini years, when Khamenei was frequently rebuffed by Qom's clerical establishment, he and Rafsanjani shared power more generously. Although not without friction, they were a team. But Khamenei's power has grown massively in the last decade, with shadow ministries usurping the authority of the official government. Rafsanjani's lair, the Expediency Council, which is supposed to solve disputes between parliament and the legislation-approving, all-cleric Guardian Council, tightly allied to Khamenei, has become less important as Khamenei's power has grown. Add to this the constant and serious threat of President Ahmadinejad, who has a neuralgic distaste for Rafsanjani and his corrupt clan, and it's not hard to see why Rafsanjani went on the warpath against Khamenei, who has a spiritual brother in Ahmadinejad.

Yet there is no man in Iran who would more quickly cut a deal with Khamenei if he thought it were in his interest to do so. And the reverse is probably true: Khamenei would bite the bullet if he thought Rafsanjani had outplayed him, by aligning enough clerical backing and dividing the Revolutionary Guard Corps, to make the theoretical possibility of his removal from office seem a bit more concrete. (The Assembly of Experts, which Rafsanjani is on but does not dominate, has the power to remove Khamenei from office.)

Both Khamenei and Rafsanjani believe in and live for the Islamic republic and neither wants it damaged. So the possibility of compromise is certainly there. Yet the current collision may be too personal for anything beyond fleeting compromises between the two men. I asked my cleric-associating informant from Tehran what he thought Rafsanjani would do, and he quickly answered: *kherabkari* ("sabotage"). He'll go at Khamenei inside the system, and he won't stop.

Revolutions tend to devour their own children, and Iran's has already consumed thousands. But even at its bloodiest moments, it pulled back from the savagery of the French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions. Iran's ruling elite doesn't like to spill the blood of its own. The Islamic republic's complex, traditional wiring—who owes loyalty to whom and who is married to whom—checks the brutality of the system. Iran's badly battered traditional culture, with its aversion to violence against women, can still constrain those who claim to defend Islamic values. It's a very good bet that few within President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's hard-line circle shed a tear about the death of Neda Agha-Soltan, the beautiful, Westernized young woman gunned down and immortalized on the Internet. Yet the regime backpedaled rapidly on her death. Moral outrage within Iran, and abroad, had an effect.

As much as some within the Revolutionary Guard Corps might like to try, the regime just can't do what the Assad family in Syria does so well: slaughter. The regime will continue to use discreet and hidden violence—secret prisons, night raids, intimidation of the families of dissidents, and extreme coercion, even assassination, of opposition leaders who have charisma, know too much, or have too many friends. The disappearance last week of Saeed Hajjarian, a former ministry of intelligence chieftain who helped mastermind Khatami's rise and Mousavi's presidential campaign, is a signal to the revolutionary elite. In 2000, Hajjarian was shot in the head and disabled, quite possibly by one of his former comrades.

The regime is scared, perhaps as much as it was during the darkest days of the Iran-Iraq war in 1987-88. The so-far successful crackdown will rebuild some of the regime's

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confidence. But only some. The illusion of broad popular support for Khamenei is gone. The lay and clerical revolutionary elites are split, and even if they can make up in the short term, the atmosphere within will probably remain a lot like that in the mafia after the FBI started successfully planting moles and bugs. Everyone will be waiting for the match that will reignite June 2009.

Which brings us to the United States. It could be an interesting time for Iranian operations in the Central Intelligence Agency. Disillusioned believers in the Iranian revolution may start volunteering information and their own services inside Iran to the clandestine service. "Walk-ins" could be a telling gauge of how despondent and angry Iranians are with their overlords. If the quality of U.S. intelligence on Iran improves over the next 12 months, we are probably seeing the fissures of June 2009 deepen.

But intelligence collection isn't policy. Leaving aside the ethics of President Obama's outreach to Khamenei and his allies, it's a dangerous course of action. Once, Senator Obama may have believed that the power of his biography, his sincerity, his anti-Bush charm, and a lot of commercial goodies could persuade the clerical regime to relent in its quest for nuclear weapons and give his administration the kind of triumph the Bush administration gained in Libya against Muammar Qaddafi's nuclear program. But it's increasingly difficult to believe that President Obama really thinks he can stop Tehran's quest for a bomb with diplomacy and sanctions. One gets vibrations from the administration that the game is changing—that the policy of engagement is for after Ali Khamenei gets his nuke.

If this is so, the supreme leader will not reciprocate the kindness. He will just view it as weakness: The Islamic republic bested the United States, and the president has come groveling. Obama's diligent attempt not to meddle in Iran during the demonstrations earned him and America no kudos. The Iranian opposition still got accused of being in league with foreign devils. And this isn't throw-away rhetoric. Conspiracy-mongering is rampant throughout the Middle East; it is cancerous among the Iranian clergy. No matter how hard the president tries to be nice, his words and actions will be seen as machinations.

If President Obama intends to do nothing serious to discourage Tehran from obtaining the bomb, then he needs to try to scare it with a militarily front-loaded containment strategy. To discourage Iran from sending its agents and terrorist surrogates to meddle abroad under cover of a nuclear umbrella, the United States and its allies must pressure the regime constantly, with tough rhetoric, a never-ending discussion of the need for greater democracy in the country, and a firm public commitment to counter any hint of Iranian terrorism with military strikes. This could keep the regime off balance and guessing about President Obama's willingness to use force.

The administration should try to admit, at least to itself, that America—not Europe, which has officially practiced engagement since 1992—is the lodestar of so many Iranian dreams. Contrary to what Obama suggested throughout his campaign, America's hostile foreign policy under both Democratic and Republican presidents did not diminish the United States' standing among the Iranian people. As the clerical regime has faltered, as the democratic forces within the country have gained ground on the theocracy, America's position has improved. It's no accident that so many trailblazing Iranian revolutionary theoreticians who have fallen from the "straight path" are now living in the United States.

All of this goes against President Obama's soft-power nature and the current within the Democratic party which holds that the world's problems, especially in the Middle East, stem in part from America's aggressiveness. Yet Ali Khamenei has surely shown the president that America's problems with the clerical regime have nothing whatsoever to do with George W. Bush. President Obama is looking at a religious and ideological chasm that he cannot, no matter what he does, cross.

Understandably, the United States has been fixated on al Qaeda, Afghanistan, and Iraq. We have all wanted to believe that the age of state-sponsored anti-American terrorism is over. Now, however, with Iran boiling, its leaders increasingly angry at us for their truant flock, state-sponsored Iranian terrorism could hit us with gale force.

The president would be well served to read again *The 9/11 Commission Report* about Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah's contact with al Qaeda (see pp. 240-241). This outreach probably started under President Clinton. September 11 and George W. Bush's bellicosity made Khamenei pull back from Sunni jihadists. It's a very good bet that the supreme leader, Ahmadinejad, and Rafsanjani, who has always been a fan of outreach to Sunni militants, are already hunting for foreign partners who hate the United States as much as they do. (There is a reason beyond uranium exports why Tehran loves Hugo Chávez.) Once they are backed by nuclear weapons, it's hard to see what the leaders of the Islamic republic would fear from an American president who avoids the word *jihad* when describing 9/11 for fear of offending Muslim sensitivities. ♦

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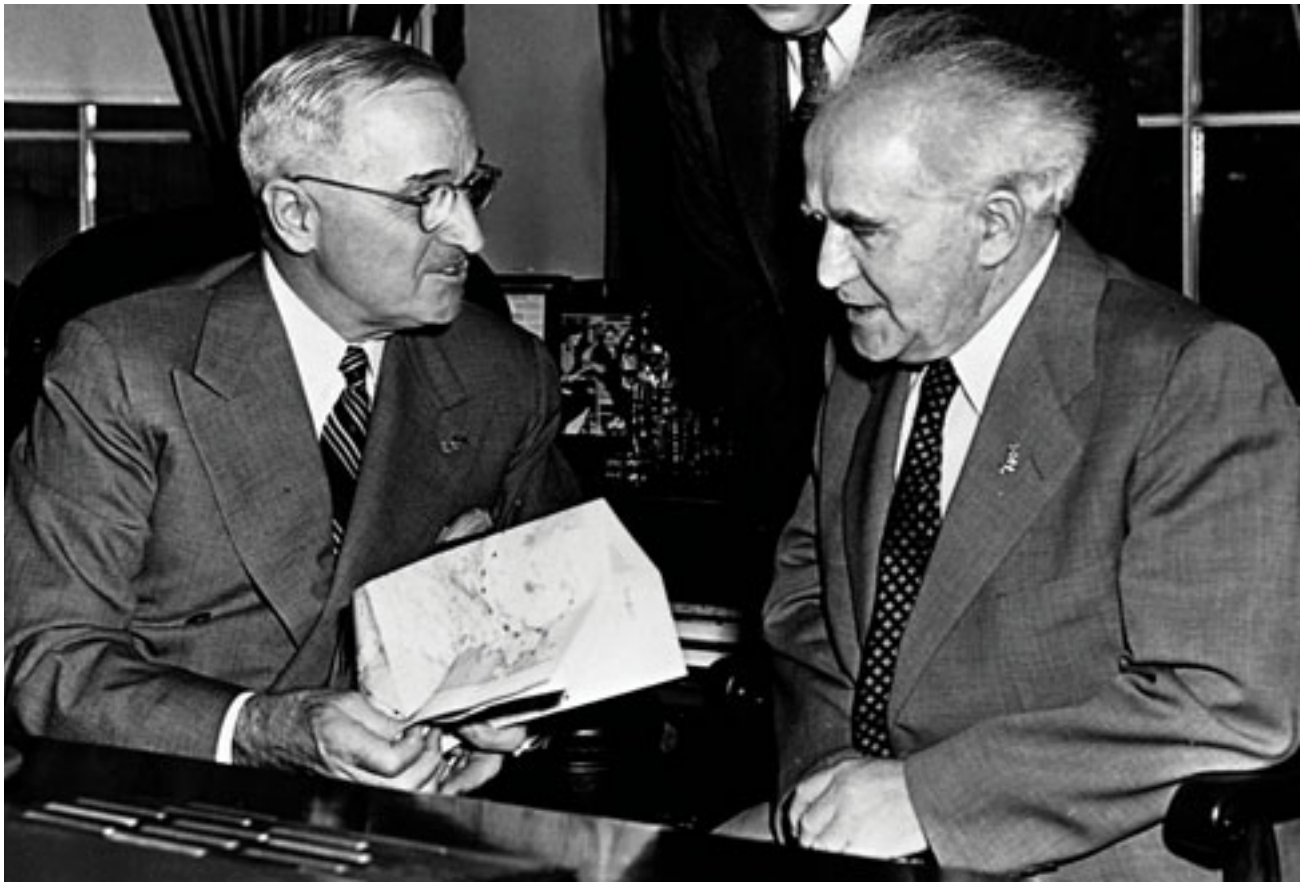

Harry S. Truman, David Ben-Gurion, 1951

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Israel's debt to Harry S. Truman

BY ALONZO L. HAMBY

The two major wars of the 20th century left in their wakes fatally enfeebled empires, raging national ambitions, hordes of displaced persons, bloody postwar conflicts, and unstoppable population transfers. Of the numerous such eruptions over the past hundred years, none has been so persistent in its impact on American engagement with the world than the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the long-running Arab-Israeli conflict that has simmered and sporadically flared up ever since.

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A Safe Haven
Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel
by Allis Radosh and Ronald Radosh
HarperCollins, 448 pp., $27.99

In this timely, very well-researched work, Allis and Ronald Radosh cover the beginnings of what has become an ever-enduring challenge of American foreign policy—the creation of Israel in the three years after the end of World War II in Europe. They steer us authoritatively through rivalries among Jewish factions in Palestine and within the United States, explore thoroughly an Anglo-American relationship that at times was strained to the limit, and in the end credit President Harry S. Truman with a sense of purpose and determination not readily evident to his contemporaries.

Their narrative begins with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, detouring on the way home from the Yalta conference in February 1945 to meet King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia aboard the U.S. cruiser *Quincy* in the Great Bitter Lake at the south end of the Suez Canal. Roosevelt, who met his visitor seated beneath three of the

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Quincy's eight-inch guns, commanded the greatest aggregation of economic and military power in human history. Ibn Saud presided over a vast desert with a relatively small population, staking his claim to Arab leadership on his role as protector of Islam's holiest sites.

But it was Roosevelt who came as a supplicant—the oil beneath those desert sands was beginning to be pumped and clearly would be of great importance to the future of the Western world. He extended lavish hospitality. A great patch of the *Quincy*'s forward deck was covered with oriental carpets, a commodious desert tent, and a sheep pen. The king, guarded by barefoot Nubian soldiers, was accompanied by his astrologer, a coffee server, and "nine miscellaneous slaves, cooks, porters and scullions."

The president, although seriously ill, mustered the charm for which he was famous as he sought the Saudi monarch's acquiescence in a goal of great importance to a vital political constituency in the United States: the admission into Palestine of hundreds of thousands of European Jews displaced and made homeless by the war that was moving toward an end in Europe. Ibn Saud peremptorily rejected the request. Responding to the argument that existing Jewish settlements had developed a desert countryside, he declared that the Jews had done so only with large amounts of U.S. and British capital and would share none of their prosperity with Arabs. They should stay in Europe; the money and land necessary for their resettlement should be taken from Germany.

Arabs, he warned, would fight and die rather than cede their patrimony to the Jews. Roosevelt, apparently surprised by the King's vehemence, backed off. In what was probably a tactical retreat rather than a genuine change of mind, he assured Ibn Saud that he would never help the Jews at the expense of the Arabs.

Two months later, Roosevelt was dead. The Palestine question was just one of many unresolved issues that he bequeathed to his successor, Harry Truman. At the time, it seemed a small one compared with the huge matters of a European settlement and the closure of the Pacific war. Over the next three years, magnified by the importance of Jews as a Democratic party constituency, it would nonetheless nearly consume Truman's presidency.

The immediate postwar issues in Palestine involved displaced persons, and the conflicting imperatives of Anglo-American diplomacy. Still, one wishes the Radoshes had given us a fuller sense of the ways in which both Jews and Arabs were motivated by a powerful blend of religious identity and ethnic nationalism. They do tell us, in passing, that when Winston Churchill also pressed Ibn Saud to approve large-scale Jewish immigration, the king responded that to do so would be "an act of treachery to the Prophet and all believing Muslims which would wipe out my honor and destroy my soul."

The Arabs were more determined on national independence than ever, the British hoped to preserve as much imperial influence as possible, and the Jews were an irritant to both.

Perhaps because the authors take for granted the justice of the establishment of a Jewish state, they tell us little about the half-century of Zionism in the Middle East that preceded the Roosevelt-Ibn Saud encounter. Jewish settlers had begun to filter back to the land of ancient Israel in the late 19th century when it was still a backwater of the Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour endorsed the concept of a Jewish homeland there. Awarding Palestine to Britain in 1922, the League of Nations authorized "the establishment of the Jewish national home." Jewish settlement increased sharply during the twenties. In response to the rise of Nazism and other varieties of European fascism, it exploded during the thirties. The Arab population, harboring its own national aspirations, responded with sporadic violence.

The young journalist Theodore H. White, himself the offspring of Zionist socialists, visited Palestine at the end of 1938. By then the Jewish population—450,000—was approximately half that of the Arabs. White found a gifted young violinist who had been a year ahead of him at Harvard working in a citrus kibbutz, striving "to make an Israel and . . . learning to use a gun," he wrote in his memoir. Jewish militiamen guarded the high ground around their settlements. A thin British force struggled to maintain order and saw the immigrants as a source of trouble. "You Jews are simply a bloody nuisance," one of their officers told White.

Moved by their own sense of nationalism and destiny, the Arabs resented both British imperialism and the Jewish incursions. By the late 1930s they were in a full-scale guerrilla revolt. In 1939 the British declared a limit of 75,000 on *all* future Jewish immigration, calming the Arabs somewhat, but setting the stage for a postwar crisis.

By 1945, little had changed. The Arabs were more determined on national independence than ever, the British hoped to preserve as much imperial influence as possible, and the Jews were an irritant to both. In Europe, squalid displaced persons camps were filled with survivors of the Holocaust determined to make their way to a Jewish national home.

The United States might have been an acceptable alternative, but Congress was unwilling to allow generous immigration quotas for *any* Europeans, Jew or Gentile. American Jewry, before the war largely indifferent to

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Zionism, had undergone a mass conversion. Heavily Democratic and an important source of campaign funds, its opinion could not be ignored by President Truman.

Truman, a Baptist, had long possessed numerous Jewish contacts; the most important was a cherished World War I comrade and former business partner, Eddie Jacobson. Jacobson would become the primary conduit of communication between the Zionist movement and the president, but numerous pro-Zionist presidential advisers—Clark Clifford, David K. Niles, and Samuel Rosenman among them—played critical roles in the struggle for the president's mind. State and Defense department officials, agreeing with the British that good relations with the emerging Arab oil states were vital, saw a prospective Jewish state in the Middle East as detrimental to American interests. They pushed back hard.

Larger Cold War goals, and Britain's need for U.S. financial support, kept the two countries aligned, but the going could be rough at times. In mid-1946 the British foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin, a blunt and burly trade unionist, responded to an American demand for the admission of 100,000 Jewish refugees into Palestine: "I hope I will not be misunderstood in America if I say that this was proposed with the purest of motives. They did not want too many Jews in New York."

The matter proceeded from an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry to the fledgling United Nations, which in those innocent days seemed capable of mandating a solution. In the meantime, what really mattered were facts being created on the ground. Increasing numbers of Jewish refugees found ways to get into Palestine, Jewish armed forces grew rapidly, and the British found themselves facing a small-scale war. The Soviet Union—although Josef Stalin considered Jews "profiteers and parasites"—threw its line into the troubled waters by sending arms to the Jewish forces. By then, the White House was enmeshed in a covert struggle with its national security bureaucracy.

Truman has struck many observers, myself included, as badly battered, and at times confused, by the vehement debate and difficult policy choices he faced. The Radoshes make a persuasive case that he secretly promised Zionist leaders, including Chaim Weizmann, that the United States would be the first nation to recognize a new Jewish state and that his apparently erratic behavior was a symptom of his determination to do so without losing his revered secretary of state, George Marshall.

Truman's motivation doubtless had a political tinge, and may have been strengthened by the widespread Protestant belief that biblical prophecy ordained the reestablishment of Israel. Subsequently lionized as a friend of an oppressed people, Truman, and most Americans, would have no regrets.

In the end, he prevailed, ordering instant recognition of the new state of Israel and suffering not a single resignation in protest. His motivation doubtless had a political tinge, reflecting to some degree his longtime friendship with Jacobson, and may have been strengthened by the widespread Protestant belief that biblical prophecy ordained the reestablishment of Israel. Subsequently lionized as a friend of an oppressed people, Truman, and most Americans, would have no regrets.

Almost all readers of The Weekly Standard—and, I suspect, most Americans—if required to spend the rest of their lives in a Middle Eastern country would choose Israel. Its society is free, democratic, broadly tolerant, scientifically advanced, and—to be blunt—more civilized than any other in the region. Nevertheless, its birth was a violent, bloody event in which both its founders and their antagonists committed indefensible acts.

In 1947 Richard Crossman, a conflicted British participant in the Palestine controversy, wrote that Americans, impressed by the material improvements the Jews brought to Palestine, saw a parallel to their own national history of settling and developing a continent, unavoidably pushing aside aboriginal peoples who, however regrettably, had to yield to progress. Nineteenth-century Americans called the process "manifest destiny."

In Palestine, Arabs and Jews invoked competing versions of historical and religious entitlement as arguments for control of the land. But in the end, Crossman's insight was more telling: Nations have been made by settlers—whether Americans, Canadians, Australians, or biblical Israelites—with superior weaponry, organizational skills, and fighting determination. The Israelis of 1948 mustered these characteristics to beat back superior numbers and establish a small state that survives in a sea of hostility.

The ambiguities of Israel's founding and of the policies it has adopted for its survival are rightly troubling to the liberal conscience, but the Arab side is rife with its own quandaries. It is no small irony that liberals of 1948 were nearly unanimous in their backing of a Jewish state that so many of their successors, 60 years on, see as the Little Satan. Perhaps the fundamental lesson we can draw from the story that the Radoshes tell so well is that history is written in shades of gray, and moral perfection is not a phenomenon of this world. ♦

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In the Arena

Parting thoughts from the priest of the public square.

BY RYAN T. ANDERSON

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, 2006

GETTY IMAGES FOR MEET THE PRESS

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus expected to meet God as an American, and on January 8 of this year, presumably he did. The claim wasn't meant as a boast on his part, though: All had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. If he was boasting, it was a boast in the Lord. But boasting in America, too? No, his expectation to meet God as an American was simply a statement of identity: While nationality isn't paramount, it is a constitutive part of one's self. The work done for one's nation and the allegiances upheld in civic life would all be there at the time of judgment, and beyond.

American Babylon
Notes of a Christian Exile
by Richard John Neuhaus
Basic Books, 288 pp., $26.95

Ryan T. Anderson, editor of Public Discourse *at the Witherspoon Institute, was assistant editor of* First Things *during 2006-08.*

Just before his death, Father Neuhaus offered, in *American Babylon*, a final, uniquely Christian reflection on making one's way in America. He certainly had the experience: A young Lutheran pastor of a poor black church in Brooklyn, a civil rights activist marching with Martin Luther King, a Vietnam war protester, a pro-life pathbreaker, an adviser to popes and presidents, a public intellectual, and, for his last 20 years, a Roman Catholic priest serving Filipino immigrants in Manhattan while editing his journal, *First Things*.

American Babylon was sent to the printers shortly before Neuhaus's cancer took its turn for the worse, and can be read as the culmination of a life of study, activism, and devotion.

Each chapter could stand alone as an essay; many were originally published in *First Things* and expanded for this volume. Truth be told, it doesn't fully work as a book: The connections between chapters feel strained, grafted on to turn a collection of essays into something more. Nevertheless, unifying themes can be detected. Neuhaus's main concern is that America has lost its story, its citizens retaining no shared understanding of their common commitments. Merely getting along and surviving are not enough; *how* we get along and the *type* of survival we pursue are crucial.

The nation's Christians, meanwhile, tend toward dangerous extremes, either identifying America with the Kingdom of God or disengaging from political life altogether. What they need, Neuhaus argues, is a middle path. Only if they get their story right can the nation get its story right, "because they are the bearers of the true story of the world, whether the world wants to know it or not."

America isn't equated with Babylon by comparison to other temporal polities. America fares quite well compared with the presently available alternatives. But Babylon it is when compared with that elusive eschatological city, the New Jerusalem. This, Neuhaus insists, is what makes him a "Christian exile." The church, therefore, and not the state, offers a glimpse of our ultimate destiny. It serves as the *prolepsis*—"an act in which a hoped-for future is already present"—of the Kingdom; indeed, the "supreme act of prolepsis is the Eucharist . . . a supremely *political* action in which the heavenly *polis* is made present in time."

Neuhaus offers sound advice, based on years of experience and reflection, on how Christians should live between the "now" and the "not yet," pulled at once by "this-worldly" and "other-worldly" obligations.

American Babylon exudes an Augustinian sensibility—which shouldn't surprise anyone familiar with Neuhaus's theological loyalties. One recurring theme is how to temper the demands of political life, even the high aspirations Aristotle held, with an awareness of the *libido dominandi* (the lust of domination) that Augustine finds at

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the heart of every earthly power. Neuhaus returns repeatedly to Augustine's claim that "the kingdoms of men, their dominations and their servitudes" are subject to God's providential care, just like all of creation.

How citizens understand this providence proves crucial. Neuhaus suggests that the mainstream of American thought—from James Madison to Fr. John Courtney Murray—has understood America as a nation under God, particularly under God's *judgment*. This prior allegiance to God placed constraints on state prerogatives and the loyalty that citizens owe. Neuhaus then argues that the laws of God's providence are to be grasped on the basis of a shared conception of human reason.

Reason is the book's motif. With Aristotle, Neuhaus understands politics as "free persons deliberating the question, How ought we to order our life together?" This is a moral "ought," which gives rise to the inescapably moral character of politics. Like Father Murray, Neuhaus thinks that true political society involves men "locked in civil argument" about this very "ought." So it is no surprise that Neuhaus spends his middle chapters doing battle with the agents of unreason who would render this civil argument impossible.

In a chapter on moral progress, for example, he suggests that we are actually witnessing "a dramatic moral regression." From Nietzsche's will-to-power nihilism to Peter Singer's baby-killing utilitarianism, Neuhaus sees what Alasdair MacIntyre described as rule by the new barbarians. Against the materialists who insist that reasoning is merely "the product of neurosynapses in the pound of meat that is the brain," Neuhaus points out that "we cannot agree without denying the existence of the intellect that is the agent of our agreement."

Neuhaus concludes a chapter titled "Can an Atheist Be a Good Citizen?" with a resounding "No." While readily granting that atheists pay their taxes and follow laws, he argues that a good citizen must be able to give "a morally compelling account of the regime of which he is part"—which, he thinks, the atheist cannot do. Democratic self-government must be defended by reasons, which in turn must "draw authority from what is higher than ourselves, from that which transcends us, from that to which we are precedently, ultimately, obliged."

Or so he argues.

In a chapter on Richard Rorty's post-modern pragmatism, Neuhaus focuses on this issue of defending our political order's foundations. Faced with a Hitler or Stalin, Rorty admits that all he can do is ask that they "privatize their projects" and "avoid cruelty and pain." Rorty adds that "in my view, there is nothing to back up such a request, nor need there be." Responds Neuhaus: "We might well wish him luck."

Democratic self-government must be defended by reasons, which in turn must "draw authority from what is higher than ourselves, from that which transcends us, from that to which we are precedently, ultimately, obliged."

Leaving luck aside, Neuhaus wants us to cultivate the traditions of rationality within which we could back up such a request with *reasons*. Morality can play its role in politics only if reason can grasp moral truths. Paradoxically, it is Christian faith, Neuhaus argues, that sustains our confidence in reason by grounding man's reason in God's reason. Human reason "participates in the Mind of the Maker, and all that is truly real is love in response to the love by which all that is exists."

Neuhaus appeals to the natural law tradition—according to which men can know moral truth without divine revelation—and argues that the natural law is not the property of any particular religious community. Anticipating some contemporary Christians' resistance to natural law, Neuhaus cites the second-century St. Irenaeus that "from the beginning God implanted in the heart of man the precepts of the natural law. Then he reminded him of them by giving the Decalogue." He repeats his plea that the alternative to the naked public square is not the sacred public square but the civil public square.

The arguments culminate in abortion. Decrying *Roe*'s raw act of judicial power, Neuhaus insists that abortion is a preeminently political question: If politics is deliberation about how we ought to order our life together, then no issue is more foundational for deliberation than "who belongs to the *we*." True moral progress expands the scope of "who belongs to the community for which we as a community accept responsibility." This motivated Neuhaus when he marched with Martin Luther King, and it motivated him when he marched against abortion. He contends that a robust understanding of human dignity moves most Americans, if inchoately:

> A human being is a person possessed of a dignity we are obliged to respect at every point of development, debilitation, or decline by virtue of being created in the image and likeness of God. Endowed with the spiritual principle of the soul . . . the destiny of the person who acts in accord with moral conscience . . . is nothing less than eternal union with God. This is the dignity of the human person that is to be respected, defended, and indeed revered.

Yet, for all his defenses of reason, Neuhaus seems at times to pay mere lip service to the natural law tradition. Never does he discuss any natural law theories or consider the work of any academic natural law philosopher. Glosses on C.S. Lewis are all we're offered. Repeatedly Neuhaus decries the "practical or methodological atheism" of acting as if God's existence were a myth, irrelevant to public life. He thinks practical *theism* more reasonable—and more democratic, given popular views. But he fails to tell us what theology's discussion

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of ultimate matters adds to discussions of political penultimates if reason is (as he insists) capable of discerning how we ought to order our lives.

Consider Neuhaus's canticle to human dignity. What is gained, politically, by grounding human dignity in the image of God? Modern bioethics requires us to determine *what* is made in the image of God (a body, a soul, a composite?); *how* we know (for the Bible doesn't tell us so); and *when* human persons begin (at conception, when the first rational thought or free choice is made, or sometime in between?). The biblical injunction against killing won't help here, for what we need to know is precisely *when* this commandment applies.

Most Americans accept Neuhaus's basic conviction about human dignity; what they need are *reasons* why this applies "even" to embryos and cases like Terri Schiavo's.

Several times Neuhaus describes the conclusions of natural law philosophy as "common sense," but what might have been common sense for his generation is not for mine. And on radically new ethical issues, common sense is running out. Reasons must be given, and they will come from moral philosophy before being incorporated into a theological framework. We need an evaluation of a biotechnology's relationship to our humanity before any discussion of biotech and theology is even possible. Sadly, Neuhaus showed little concern in this volume for thinking through these questions, and he hasn't provided the reasons we really need.

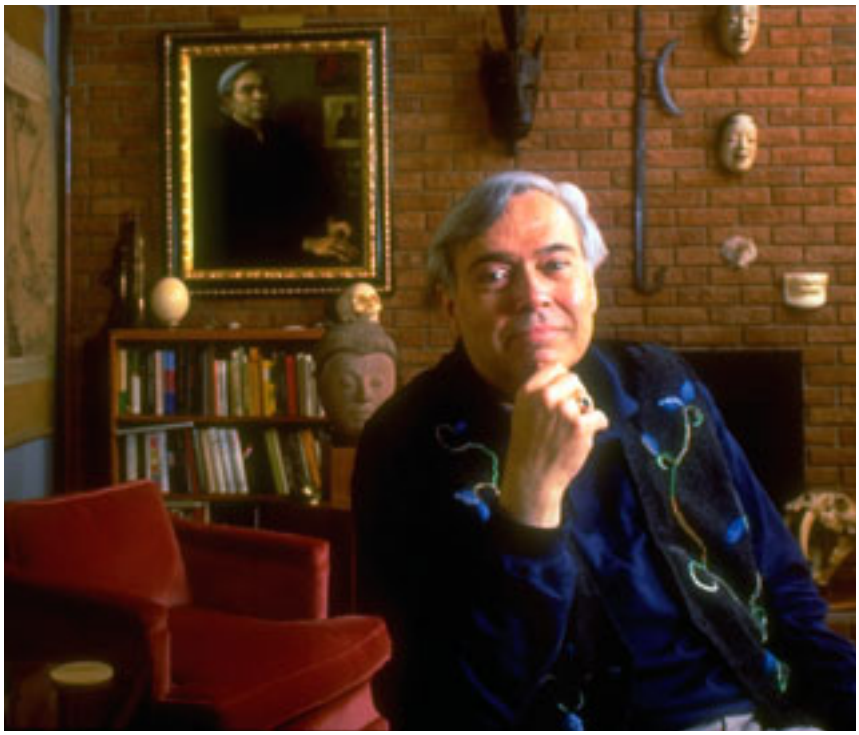
Still, *American Babylon* remains an important book at a critical moment in history. Admirers of Barack Obama would do well to consider Neuhaus's final arguments, especially his concluding chapter, "Hope and Hopelessness." To be human is to live in hope, he argues; hopelessness is existentially unsustainable. But where we place our hope makes all the difference. In his last passionate apologetic, Neuhaus insists that the most reasonable and hopeful choice is the act of faith in Jesus Christ, which assures us that life here and now really matters because it is the prolepsis of the life that is to come, the life of final tranquility in the City of God. ♦

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

Himself When Young

An American novelist on his formative years at Oxford.

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.



Reynolds Price, 1990

A quarter century ago, in the midst of what had been a rich life of writing and teaching, Reynolds Price suffered a devastating spinal cancer whose treatment by radiation and surgery left him wheelchair-bound and deeply depressed. He was given 18 months to live; but happily the prognosis was wildly premature, and he has since enjoyed a triumphant increase of artistic powers. And it continues. As if in compensation, that drastic encounter with illness opened doors of memory and inspired a triptych of distinguished memoirs.

Ardent Spirits
Leaving Home, Coming Back
by Reynolds Price
Scribner, 416 pp., $35

Ardent Spirits, the latest, is about his experiences at Oxford (1955-58). The preceding volume, *A Whole New Life*, described his struggle with pain, physical and emotional, and the spiritual vision and professional rededication that attended it. It is a classic of a difficult genre.

The "ardent spirits" in this latest volume are obviously figurative. He was intrigued to hear a guide at Monticello say that while Jefferson preferred fine wines, he kept ardent spirits (distilled liquors) for guests. These spirits are his hosts of friends from the Oxford years and later, none more ardent than Price himself.

Edwin M. Yoder Jr. wrote about Oxford in his own memoir, Telling Others What to Think: Recollections of a Pundit.

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Oxford, a place of physical power and haunting memories, is famously challenging to write about. One who seeks its inward texture must contest very articulate forerunners—for instance Edward Gibbon, who wrote several versions of his autobiography. Gibbon came to Magdalen College as a teenager, became a Catholic convert, and was quickly snatched away to Geneva by his father for Calvinist reprogramming. But not before he unforgettably deplored the "monks of Oxford, steeped in port and prejudice," an immortal phrase stamped on the mind of every word-conscious Oxonian. Gibbon's successors are legion and include Cardinal Newman, whose poignant farewell to the snapdragons of Trinity College is as indelible as the "dull and deep potations" of Gibbon's dons.

Reynolds Price's recollection of the Oxford of 50 years ago are, however, in a way atypical—less concerned than others have been with the textures of place. Price is not especially haunted by the misty fogs and buildings of the aged city—encrusted, in his time and mine, by a century of industrial soot. It is true that he lived for a year in Mob Quad at Merton College, reputedly the oldest such structure in the university. There is, of course, some routine grumbling about plumbing and heating.

Mob Quad, Merton College, Oxford

TOM MURPHY VII

In Price's day, Oxford maintained the amusing conceit that students—even green transatlantic visitors—should be treated as friends and peers. Price obviously took advantage of that conceit. *Ardent Spirits* is crowded with detailed, often amusing, pen portraits of the university's personalities.

One lacks space for much of this rich vein, but one or two examples may give the flavor: Lord David Cecil, who directed his BLitt thesis on Milton: "[I]n a lifetime's acquaintance with world-class talkers, I've known no other conversationalist who equaled David Cecil." Or W.H. Auden, who came twice a year to lecture as professor of poetry: "Even in his relaxed moments . . . coming to the end of our first half-quart of martinis, he'd fall silent for two long draws on his endless cigarettes; and in the brief silence . . . I could hear his great mind turning like the wheels of a vast locomotive."

Later, after his return to the United States, there was a snapshot viewing of Edmund Wilson at work on his Civil War book, *Patriotic Gore*: "(Wilson . . . for me had the almost transparent physical air of an ancient Chinese sage with tiny expressive hands and a tendency to talk straight forward into the air as though none of us was present.)"

Price, indeed, seems to have had a genius for notable encounters, unlikely eminences sometimes turning up briefly in the lanes of Oxford (Nikita Khrushchev) or in their dressing rooms at Stratford (Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh) or reciting tales of personal humiliation at small London dinners (John Gielgud) or being fetched for Rhodes House receptions (Robert Frost).

Price's first full-length tale, a North Carolina country story called *A Long and Happy Life*, began to take shape at Oxford, even as he labored at his thesis on "Samson Agonistes." Price felt a growing consciousness, even at a distance of thousands of miles, of the personal legacy of folk speech and storytelling of his native eastern North Carolina, the land of his people for generations. The iconic opening paragraph of his first novel, in its verbal agility, foreshadowed his success as a phrasemaker and teller of tales. It certainly sticks in the reader's ear:

> Just with his body and from inside like a snake, leaning that black motorcycle side to side, cutting in and out of the slow line of cars . . . staring due-north through goggles toward Mount Moriah and switching coon tails in everybody's face was Wesley Beavers, and laid against his back like sleep, spraddle-legged on the sheepskin seat behind him was Rosacoke Mustian, who was maybe his girl. . . .

Once viewed, the rustic cyclist Wesley Beavers, weaving his way through a funeral procession with his pregnant girl clinging behind, is hard to forget.

Ardent Spirits is, then, a gallery of portraits and a chronicle of artistic self-discovery. It is also a strong contribution to the literature of sexual candor. Price, self-described as "a devoted disciple of physical beauty," evokes his sexual inclination with urbanity and honesty—nothing morbid or pathological about it. Homosexuality is today a topic rendered almost as banal with political contention as it was shrouded in bigotry and illegality 50 years ago; but Price, as usual, has fresh things to say. As a guardian of English, for instance, he is unhappy with the preemption of the useful adjective "gay."

> *Gay* struck me at once as merely inaccurate if not seriously inappropriate. I saw none of us as especially carefree. . . . The degree to which it still seems to me a bad misnomer was clarified, above all, when the AIDS plague hit the nation. . . . *Gay* as a common label for homosexual identity became not only a cruel joke but also a political error at a time when federal money for research and treatment was desperately needed. The enemies of homosexuality were handed, gratis, a name which suited their contention that homosexuals were giddy irresponsibles.

This may be taken as a companioning sentiment to his trenchant protest, in one of his books of religious apologetics, against the fashionable "gender-neutral" designation of the

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godhead as possibly feminine, implicating women as it does in the woeful mischief of the divine will. In any case, *Ardent Spirits* is not "about" sexuality. It is about love and friendship in their broad, particular reaches.

Price writes also about his first three years as an apprentice instructor at Duke, where he is now James B. Duke Professor of English. During those years he published his first significant fiction. He has since published some 37 volumes of fiction, memoirs, poetry, biblical translation, and criticism—all of it attesting to the variety and durability of his talent. If his readers are lucky, *Ardent Spirits* will certainly not be the last. ♦

Crystal Ballplay

When a futurist looks to the future, anything is possible, and war is imminent. **BY DAVID AIKMAN**

Forecasting several decades, not to mention a century, into the future has commonly belonged to the realm of science fiction. And there are, indeed, portions of this book that seem to belong there. But George Friedman's speculative look at the future, whatever its faults, is mostly rational, reasonable, and lacking in cant. Friedman, the founder of a private intelligence agency, is a specialist in geopolitics, the analysis of geography, history, and social science. Geopolitics focuses especially on real or potential future conflict: Friedman's analysis concentrates on looking at what he says are "powerful long-term shifts taking place in full view of the world."

The Next 100 Years
A Forecast for the 21st Century
by George Friedman
Doubleday, 272 pp., $25.95

As he suggests, those "long-term shifts" have led Friedman to some interesting conclusions. Want to know who—besides the ever-dominant America—will be among the global top dogs in 2100? Turkey, Poland, and Mexico.

Friedman's most interesting insight might be thought of as pure common sense. "The most brilliant leader of Iceland," he writes, "will never turn it into a world power, while the stupidest leader of Rome at its height could not undermine Rome's fundamental power." Geopolitics, Friedman asserts, "is not about the right and wrong of things, it is not about the virtues or vices of politicians, and it is not about foreign policy debates." Rather, he says, it is about "impersonal forces that constrain nations and human beings and compel them to act in certain ways."

The impersonal forces that led to the rise of Rome or the United States are, in Friedman's view, simply immune to the temporary vagaries of wise or foolish national leadership. Beware, though, of overgeneralizing; Friedman insists that the only thing one can be sure of in predicting the future is that "common sense will be wrong."

Despite those caveats, Friedman admits to a bias. He is, he says, America-centric, and the book is clearly written from an American point of view. In preempting charges of parochialism or chauvinism, Friedman makes the obvious point that the United States *is*, in economic terms, the pivot around which most of the world moves. Americans account for only 4 percent of the global population, yet they consume about 26 percent of global goods and services. The GDP of the entire world was, in 2007, about $54 trillion; but America's GDP for that year was $14 trillion, an amazing 26 percent of the total. The American economy was larger than the four next-largest economies combined: Japan, China, Germany, and Great Britain.

When it comes to military power, the disparity is even more startling. The United States is still the world's dominant superpower. In sea power alone, Friedman notes, the U.S. Navy fields more ships than the remainder of the world's largest navies—combined.

Why, then, does America seem afflicted by a permanent sense of impending doom? So many Americans seem convinced that our best days are past and that we are on the brink of national disaster. Friedman suggests that this is an immature basic culture expressing itself: "The manic combination of exultant hubris and profound gloom." He dismisses these attitudes as "an extended adolescent identity crisis" and says that they demonstrate the fact that America is just not yet "fully civilized." In fact, in several places, he says that America is "barbaric" while Europe, by contrast, was barbaric in the 16th century but has proceeded through maturity into decadence.

It is all very stimulating. Early on Friedman alludes to the two great originals of geopolitical thinking: Englishman Sir Halford Mackinder, with his "world island" interpretation of global power ("he who controls the heartland—Eurasia—controls the world island"), and Alfred Thayer Mahan, the American naval officer who wrote *The Influence of Sea Power on History*, which deeply influenced Theodore Roosevelt and was bedside reading for Kaiser Wilhelm II. Mahan's thesis was that control of the "rimland," coastal areas and ocean chokepoints accessible to naval power, would most effectively lead to global dominance.

David Aikman is the author, most recently, of The Delusion of Disbelief: Why the New Atheism is a Threat to Your Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness.

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In Friedman's view, however, the 21st century equivalent of sea power will be space power, in which the United States will have preeminence, but not overwhelming dominance. In a segment that *does* resemble science fiction, Friedman posits a world war in the middle of this century between the United States and its allies Poland, Britain, and China and an opposing adversarial coalition of Turkey and Japan, along with reluctant ally Germany. Only America's superb industrial power will enable the nation to recover from its losses and defeat the Turkish-Japanese coalition. When victory finally comes, moreover, the United States will wisely *not* insist on unconditional surrender but merely the limiting of the enemy coalition's ability to expand its sphere of influence!

In this engrossing, extended rumination on the future of geopolitics, there are some interesting predictions, and some that seem surprising. Mexico, Friedman believes, will have an economy among the top 10 of the world in 2100 and will want to reclaim the territories that it lost to the young United States. Friedman wholly dismisses the possibility that China will emerge as a superpower: Internal economic and political forces, he says, will cause China to fragment. Russia will also go into decline as the expansion of Eastern European powers like Poland effectively moves the Russian border further east. Then a renascent Turkey will make its move into the Caucasus and Central Asia.

There are some curious omissions. Friedman nowhere allows for the possible triumph, regionally or nationally, of some new political ideology such as fascism or communism. He brusquely dismisses the notion that Islamofascism has any more life in it. He pays no attention at all to the possibility that Europe may become Islamicized by the end of the current century.

To be sure, Friedman is modest enough to admit that, in many details, he will probably be wrong. But of course, he has every reason to be modest: His 1991 bestseller was entitled *The Coming War With Japan*. ♦

Final Impressionist

Along the Riviera, Pierre Bonnard gets his due.

BY PIA CATTON

'Before Dinner,' 1924

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

There are reasons enough to take a swing through the French Riviera, but for the art lover, here's one more. The palm-tree-lined town of Le Cannet, just north of Cannes, has established the first and only museum devoted to the painter Pierre Bonnard. Located in a classic villa, the museum will be fully open and complete next year, but the first exhibition is now on view until late September.

The French government has given the Bonnard Museum the status of Musée de France, which is given to national treasures such as the Louvre and the Musée d'Orsay. It's a recognition that may seem perfunctory, but, in fact, it helps to elevate the legacy of a painter who has long been assigned to a lower talent bracket than he deserved.

Assigned by whom? Well, for one, Pablo Picasso, who poo-pooed Bonnard: "That's not painting, what he does." More broadly, while Picasso and his ilk were reacting to the world by deconstructing it, critics saw Bonnard as a leftover relic of Impressionism, an old man in a new world. But as the new director of the Metropolitan Museum, Thomas Campbell, wrote in the catalogue accompanying its recent "Pierre Bonnard: The Late Interiors," there's another way to see Bonnard: "[It] makes a renewed case for his significance as a modernist in the narrative of early twentieth-century art. Although Bonnard's legacy may be removed from the succession of trends that today we consider the foundation of modernism, his contribution to French art in the early decades

Pia Catton is life editor of Politico.

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of the twentieth century is far more profound than history has generally acknowledged."

The Met exhibit focused on Bonnard's output from 1923 to 1947, the years during which he worked mainly in the Cote d'Azur town of Le Cannet. In 1926, Bonnard bought a villa there and called it Le Bosquet ("the Grove"). In February 1927 he moved into Le Bosquet with Marthe de Meligny, his model, companion, and, as of 1925, his wife. (Bonnard was associated with another model, Renée Monchaty, to whom he had earlier proposed marriage. She committed suicide after Marthe objected to that union!)

The paintings from this late period—less celebrated than his nudes and bathers—show a synthesis of styles. Bonnard (born in 1867) started out as part of the Nabi movement, which emphasized symbolism and muted tones. But by the time of these intensely colorful still lifes and interiors he had taken a route to territory all his own. Writes curator Dita Amory:

> If Bonnard's trajectory was far removed from the avant-garde circles of Fauvism, Cubism, and Surrealism, his color was nonetheless more radical at times than that of the Fauves, his imagery more complex and mysterious than that of either Cubism or Surrealism. More important, his process of looking always remained highly original.

His late paintings depict all the sensory delights—bowls of fruit, colorful flowers, rich tablecloths—of a meal taken in cool shade on a hot day. Central to the complexity of his work is that he did not paint *en plein air* or by looking directly at his subjects: He did not simply paint lunch before consuming it. Instead, he would create a sketch of a scene, making notes on color, space, and light. Then, in his studio, he painted from notes and memory, contemplating how the objects interacted with each other and within the light—as he envisioned it. He gave himself the liberty to change the colors of objects (that's what Picasso was objecting to), add human figures (who seem somewhat ghostly), and remove what the composition did not need.

His choices and decisions are what make the paintings. As Bonnard said of his efforts: "I'm trying to do what I have never done, give the impression one has on entering a room: One sees everything and at the same time nothing." This particular statement—amid the color-saturated paintings of tables set for bright mornings and languid afternoons—opened a world of memory for me: I once attended a lunch in Italy at the Castello di Vicarello, a village-turned-resort in the Tuscan Maremma. The sunlight was radiant. The hills were green. The hostess wore Pucci.

In a leafy garden, she had organized a lunch that included a leg of smoked boar, homemade ricotta, and a variety of beans, salads, and pastas. I don't remember talking to the other people at the lunch, and though I know every bite was delicious, I don't really remember eating. But I do remember the first sight of that buffet table: the tablecloth, the leg of boar (positioned at that awkward angle for carving), and the waiter and trees behind the table.

Bonnard's "Basket of Fruit in the Sun" (1927) could be his own memory of a similar spread. On a narrow table with a printed tablecloth are various items including a basket and bowl filled with fruit. The table casts a short, dark shadow while the rest of the painting is a mottled yellow, orange, and green field that suggests both grass and bright sunlight. Even when he worked with white, as in the tablecloth in "Lunch or Breakfast" (1932), everything else in the painting glows with color: a small blue cup, a vase of flowers, the overlapping colors of the walls and structure of the interior. "Dining Room on the Garden" (1934-35) captivates with a view of both the interior (with a table, chair, and fruit in bowls) and a view of the intensely blue and green garden.

It seems absurd that a case for Bonnard needs to be made. But with the Met's show and the creation of the new museum in Le Cannet, his legacy may have its own renaissance. ♦

No Fly Zone

The obvious answer to the cost of travel.

BY THOMAS SWICK

Right now millions of Americans are thinking: staycation.

Curiously, there is very little staycationing information available. I personally don't think this is an accident; the travel industry continues to proselytize, often subliminally. You've seen that Viagra ad—the graying middle-aged couple that read at home in muted tones and then get on a boat to a tropical isle where they break out in pastels and loony grins as they walk to their beachfront bootyshack. As if Viagra isn't enough; you need a change of scenery, too!

Well, I say: Viva Staycation! Walk right past those magazine covers of beautiful women in faraway places. (They're models who have no idea where they are.) Ignore the guidebooks shouting "China" or "Portugal." Don't trust any travel section that writes about places you can't get to on a gallon of gas. The people behind them are clearly not living in the 21st century.

Thomas Swick, the author of Unquiet Days: At Home in Poland, *is the author, most recently, of* A Way to See the World: From Texas to Transylvania with a Maverick Traveler.

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Let Thomas Friedman rack up frequent flyer miles in pursuit of a greener world. You, my friends, are staying home. Home is where the action is.

But as I said, there's not a lot out there right now—*Zero Places to See Before You Die*—to help Americans understand this. The travel-industrial complex includes some very influential people who have built enormous empires based on the idea that seeing the world is exciting, romantic, educational, and imperative. (That's the kind of tendentious language they use.) It would kill them to see the ascendance of a competing, and seductive, philosophy of inertia and incuriousness.

Sure, some travel sections have paid it lip service, but that's been less out of true conviction than a lack of money. For journalism, the staycation is the last resort.

As a leisure concept, the staycation is extremely young, which partly explains the absence of literature. No one has yet had time to write the great never-got-out-of-the-driveway novel. (Xavier De Maistre's *A Journey Around My Room* and Tibor Fischer's *Voyage to the End of the Room*, while both interesting works, are not about people on holiday.) And schools, which perennially lag behind the rest of society, continue to assign the stale what-I-did-on-my-summer-vacation essay.

It's incredible, when you think about it, that in an age of inaction—when, instead of going outside to play, kids sit indoors at computers—the staycation has not become an American institution. We need to abolish the stigma of staying home. As a people, we've been fairly good at ignoring other countries—only about a quarter of the population owns a passport—but now we have to begin ignoring other states, other counties, other townships as well.

If it makes you feel better, by all means say you're worried about your carbon footprint. But for heaven's sake don't apologize. Today, people proudly announce that they eat only locally grown vegetables; are they going to diss you because you hang around town for two weeks?

There are centuries of prejudice and propaganda to overcome—Thomas Wolfe's overblown classic *You Can't Go Home Again* being just one obvious example—but you have the time to change things. That's the inherent beauty of the staycation: You're not going anywhere. The hours you would have spent reading dull guidebooks, making dubious reservations, checking cheap airfares, sitting in airports, crawling on freeways, nodding to the spiels of unintelligible tour guides, searching ancient cities for ATMs, waiting for waiters to bring you the check—they all stretch gloriously empty in front of you now.

Sounds pretty enticing already, doesn't it? Last year it was all very new to you, the wandering around the house on a Wednesday afternoon. This summer it will have a purpose and a goal: to change the image of the housebound holidaymaker. Put down *Outside* and pick up *Interiors*. Forget *The Amazing Race*; think *The Phenomenal Nap*. Don't be a tourist, be a homebody.

People assume that, just because you're not going anywhere, you lead a dull life. Have they never heard of Netflix? You're lacking a sense of adventure, they say. As if shopping at Costco doesn't quicken the pulse.

They'll come back, these Old Schoolers, with videos and folk art and stories galore. Smile politely and recite one of the hundred poems you committed to memory during their absence, preferably Billy Collins's *Consolation*, which begins: "How agreeable it is not to be touring Italy this summer." Don't mention that you had the most wonderful, memorable staycation ever because—well, you don't want to rub it in.

And besides, who would believe you? ♦

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Yawn Dillinger

It's not the thief but the den of thieves that makes a crime movie. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

For the fifth time since he was shot dead outside Chicago's Biograph Theatre in 1934, John Dillinger is the subject of a movie. And like its predecessors, *Public Enemies* doesn't quite do it.

There are all kinds of wonderful things about *Public Enemies*, especially the way it transports you into a resolutely unglamorous 1930s America without special effects or stylized settings. It's long, and at times it's hard to hear the dialogue (an unfortunate specialty of writer-director Michael Mann), but it always holds your interest, and there's a spectacular depiction of a famous cocked-up midnight effort to nail Dillinger at a Wisconsin roadhouse. Still, there is a hole at the center of *Public Enemies*, and that hole is Dillinger himself.

Public Enemies
Directed by Michael Mann

You'd think Dillinger's story could support any number of movies: After all, this is a man who busted out of prison and went on a yearlong bank-robbery spree that became front-page news. He was even captured before staging a second jailbreak. But aside from a single encounter between Dillinger and the press, when he was supposedly insouciant and charming, he was a cipher. The terrific book by Bryan Burrough upon which the new movie is based makes it clear that Dillinger's success was primarily attributable to primitive policing and jailhouse protection rather than to any particular brilliance on Dillinger's part.

Indeed, Dillinger's legend has survived primarily because of the stunning story of his death—with federal agents blackmailing the notorious "lady in red," a hooker of Dillinger's acquaintance, into telling them where Dillinger would be heading on the night they eventually gunned him down on a busy North Side street. And that, of course, had nothing to do with Dillinger himself.

The narrative blunder of *Public Enemies* is in focusing on Dillinger when it might have given the lion's share of attention to Melvin Purvis, the G-Man who finally got him after making a million mistakes along the way. The movie does tell both stories, but it dwells on Dillinger's, oddly underplayed by the usually great Johnny Depp. Scene after scene depicts his romance with a hat-check girl named Billie Frechette, which never comes off as the torrid affair the screenplay suggests it is. Neither Depp nor Marion Cotillard, who won an Oscar last year for playing Edith Piaf in a movie nobody saw, brings a moment's conviction to the you're-my-gal-and-I-get-what-I-want/I-don't-want-to-see-you-die dialogue we've heard before in a thousand crook-and-girlfriend movies.

They actually seem rather indifferent toward each other; there's no chemistry between Depp and Cotillard. (Maybe he couldn't get over the fact that, in real life, Cotillard believes the destruction of the Twin Towers was an inside job.)

The treatment of Purvis's bungles and missteps in the pursuit of Dillinger gives *Public Enemies* its narrative freshness. Purvis worked for the Bureau of Investigation, the federal office that would blossom into the FBI. (Billy Crudup gives a wonderful little performance as the young J. Edgar Hoover, sounding as though his voice comes straight out of an ancient radio.)

A man of great, even overweening rectitude, Purvis believed in the use of "advanced techniques" to catch his man, but ran a squad that couldn't manage to keep its eye on the back door of Dillinger's apartment building, and got most of its information the old-fashioned way—through physical and psychological intimidation. Playing Purvis, the commanding if bizarrely simian Christian Bale captures perfectly the stiff-postured pride of a man entirely sure of himself even though he doesn't seem to have all that much reason to be so.

Perhaps the reason the Bureau of Investigation story is more interesting than the Dillinger story is that Dillinger was basically a solitary actor. The movie provides him with a few friends and associates to interact with, but they barely register. Great crime movies center on gangs. They show us how thieves act in their dens, and their ultimate subject is not the crimes they commit or the government's efforts to get them, but rather the inevitability of betrayal. They work hard to raise the sentimental prospect of honor among thieves and then dash it on the shoals of character—the bad character of bad guys.

UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Public Enemies never gets us into the den of thieves, because Dillinger didn't have one, except in prison, before he ever attempted a bank robbery. That's why he's not a good subject for a movie, even one as accomplished and impressive as *Public Enemies*. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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U.S. President Barack Obama and France's President Nicolas Sarkozy take their places with junior G8 delegates, including Brazil's 17-year-old Mayora Tavares, left, for a family photo at the G8 summit in L'Aquila, Italy, on July 9, 2009. —Reuters

Not a Parody

REUTERS / JASON REED

the weekly Standard
July 20, 2009

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